

A
Practical Discourse
CONCERNING
The REDEEMING
O F
T I M E.

B Y
Edward Pelling, D. D. Chaplain
in Ordinary to their Majesties, and
Rector of *Petworth* in *Suffex*.

Imprimatur,
Aug. 7. 1694.

Carolus Alston.

L O N D O N :

Printed for *John Everingham*, at the
Star in *Ludgate-street*, near the West End
of *St. Paul's*. MDCXCV.

Henry Morluck was

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A
Practical Discourse

Concerning the
Redeeming of TIME.

C H A P. I.

*What is meant by the Redeeming of
 Time, and the Reasons for it.*

ST. Paul in two several places directs
 us to Redeem Time, Ephes. 5. 16, and
 Col. 4. 5. And that I may not, by a-
 ny needless Preface, spend that
 which he thought so Precious, as to be worth
 all our endeavours to Redeem, I shall im-
 mediately pitch upon the consideration of
 the

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the matter, and enquire into three necessary things.

First, What is meant by Redeeming of Time.

Secondly, How very Reasonable our Duty is as to this particular.

Thirdly, How we may order the matter so, as to Redeem our Time to good purpose.

First then ; Some look upon this Phrase, *The Redeeming of Time*, as a Proverbial Expression ; and understand by it, the using all Prudent and Honest ways to avoid present Danger ; By putting Danger off by Delays, and by *Gaining of Time*, as we are wont to speak. And in this sense the *Greek Translation of the Bible* uses the Phrase, *Dan. 2. 8.* And *Seneca* hath an Expression very like it to the same purpose (*Epist. 13.*)

But supposing this to be the immediate Scripture-sense of the Phrase, it is not inconsistent to understand it in the more Literal Construction, and as it commonly sounds in *English*, for the Application of all possible Endeavours to make the best use of our Time we can. This Sense is proper ; and considering how Necessary the Practice of the thing is, I shall take the liberty to Discourse of it according to the usual importance

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tance of the words, with due Submission to the Judgment of some Learned Interpreters.

To *Redeem*, is to recover that which was once Lost, and when we apply it to *Time*, it signifies the Recovering of those Hours, which have been *mispent*, and *thrown away*; by Labouring hard for the Future, to employ every Minute we have to good purpose. *Time* is always in the *Flux*; nor can we have any present possession, but of a moment. God gives us our *Time*, Minute by Minute; that we may be the better Husbands of it; especially considering that on every Moment an Eternity of Happiness or Misery doth depend; nor is it possible for us to Recover Yesterday, so as to make that to be present again, which is actually Elapsed. The nature of the thing will not allow it: and yet it is possible to do it a *Moral* way; by making all the *Compensation* we can for what is gone, by the Inticement of our Zeal, and by the multiplication of our good *Actions*; by adding in weight that which is wanting as to the number of our days; by rendring our selves doubly beneficial; as if we made one day, two, by improving the Present in Proportion suitable and tantamount to what is gone. This is in Gods Account, a Revocation of our time; a *Redemption* of it; so as to make it our own again; by laying out an equivalent proportion of Industry and Labour, in lieu

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of those Hours which have been either squandred away, or not half so well employed, as they ought, and might have been.

'And this I take to be the ground of that Rule, by which our Saviour tells us, he will proceed, *The First shall be Last; and the Last, First; or, the First shall be as the Last; and the Last as the First;* Meaning, that tho' God is pleas'd to call some to the Knowledge of the Gospel much earlier than he doth others; yet many of those who Embrace the Faith later than the rest, shall receive an equal Reward with such as Profess'd it sooner. The reason is, because these made up their Time by their Extraordinary diligence; they that go into the *Vine-yard at the Last Call*, may by the earnestness and vigour of their Performances, deserve as well, and do as much Work in a little time, as those who have *born the Heat and Burden of the Day*, and yet did not work so hard, tho' they went in at the *First Call*. Hence Christ said, *Many are called, but few chosen*; that is, tho' many Profess the Truth, yet few in comparison, make such vast improvements of their Time, as by their Extraordinary Labours to render themselves Eminent and Choice Servants of God. That extraordinary Labourer, and most Zealous Apostle (*St. Paul, I mean*) was One of those few. He said indeed, *That he was the Least of the Apostles, and less than the least of all Saints, and that*

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that he was as one born out of due time, 1 Cor. 15. 8. But, though to shew his great Humility, and Repentance for his Sins, he spake so disdainfully of himself, as if he were like an *Abortive*, that wanted those perfect Proportions which a Child hath, that stayeth the full Course of Nature; yet he filled up his time by his *unparallel'd Zeal and Vigour*; nor doth all the Scripture, I think, give us such another Instance, as he was, to shew what it is to Redeem the Time; I Labour'd, (said he) more abundantly than they All, 1 Cor. 15. 10. These were not Vain, Boasting Expressions, but a just acknowledgment of what he found himself Obligated to do to make God and Man all possible Reparation. He would not lose an Hour more; but strove to Expiate his Guilt for coming so late into the Church, and for wasting it so before his Entrance.

By this great Example of himself, which the penitent Apostle set to his own Advice, we may easily perceive what it is to Redeem the Time. He was ready to be at any cost, to retrieve (what he could) those fair Opportunities of doing the World and himself good, which upon his melancholy Reflections, he saw were dropt out of his hands. Labour, Sufferings, Life it self; All he thought little enough to make amends. So that to Redeem our time in St. Pauls way is, with all possible application and Earnestness of mind to make the Best use we can of the Present,

to

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to Increase our diligence every New day ; as to employ the Remainder of our life with such great care and husbandry, as if we were within a short space to dye, and to go to Judgment.

And if people would but *seriously* consider, how valuable time is, and what the Consequences will most certainly be, whether they Improve, or Throw it away, one would think no other Motive would be needful, to make them Husband it well, but this Single thought ; that whatever they do, they are still dealing for an Eternity. It is the onely business we have in this world, to be evermore Regular and constant in the course God hath set us, as the Sun is in his motions. From the womb to the Grave we have our days numbred out unto us ; or however we spend them, whether well, or ill, we may be sure it will turn to some account : there is no medium, or Remedy, but we must be *Infinitely Gainers or Losers* by it ; this is evident to all who believe a Future state.

However, that notions of this kind, may make the deeper impression, 'twill be requisite in the prosecution of this subject to consider distinctly these three things.

I. First, how very Prejudicial to the soul we find the Loss of time to be already.

Secondly,

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II

Secondly, how Irreparable the Loss will be in another life.

And Thirdly, how dangerous it is, in relation even to our present outward fortunes. These few things, if gravely and wisely consider'd, would naturally excite men to Redeem their time, while it is yet in their Power, and while the Price of Redemption is as yet in their hand.

CHAP.

C H A P II.

How very prejudicial to the Soul Men may find the loss of Time to be already.

First, **H**OW very prejudicial to the Soul we find the loss of *Time* to be already. The Perfections of the Soul, whether they be *Intellectual*, or *Moral*, are not wrought by any sudden instantaneous Infusion, but are acquired by degrees; *Knowledge*, by Speculation and hard Studies: *Virtue*, by Practice, by many repeated Acts, which improve good Dispositions into a settled habit of *Living well*; now this requires *Time*, and therefore the Scripture expresses it, by *growing in Grace*, 2 Pet. 3. 18. because those gracious Dispositions rise and increase gradually. Though the Principle be *Supernatural*, yet 'tis *Industry* and *Time* that bringeth Fruit unto Perfection. A *Mushroom* may be the work of a Night only, but substantial *Virtue* and *Piety*, being Acts of a Mans Will, governed by Arguments from *Reason* and *Revelation*, must needs be of slow growth; especially so as to become customary and habitual.

habitual. Upon this account the loss of Time is very sensibly prejudicial to Peoples Souls, because thereby the business of their Salvation (in the Works whereof they should have kept equal Paces with their Time, that great and urgent business) is put quite backward, and left behind-hand, never to be fetch'd up again without *double Diligence* at the least. Their Understandings are darkened or deluded, for want of that true Information, which their Minds might have received, had they not slept or sported away many happy Opportunities, or spent them upon secular Concernments. Their Sense of Religion is comparatively very superficial, by their neglecting those Hours which should have been employed about it. Their *Virtues* are inconsiderable for want of Practice. Briefly, all those Improvements which others have made, and which are necessary for all, to prepare and fit their Souls for a *blessed State* hereafter, such careless People are to seek for, and perhaps at last despair of making, when once they are thoroughly sensible of their Neglects, and find the Inconveniences of a sick Bed, or the dulness of old Age to come upon them. Instead of those Perfections in *Grace and Goodness*, Vice gets ground apace, every day it grows more and more habitual; till in the end it is as hard a matter to reform those who are accustomed to do Evil, as it is to make an *Ethiopian* change his Skin, or a Leopard his Spots, *Jer. 13. 23.*
We

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We should therefore *Redeem the Time*; while possibility and practicableness of the thing gives us Encouragements. We commonly look back upon our Losses with a sadness, and with many disquieting *Thoughts*: God knoweth, 'tis too often thus in our ordinary Affairs, though it be natural enough, 'tis the ready way to create pain in the Heart of any unprosperous Man to consider, not only what Fortunes he hath actually *lost*, but what *Advantages* he has *miss'd* too; what he might have come to, had he been diligent and wise; what he might have *done*; what he might have *been*; how many he might have out-stript in the World; how many ways he might have improved his Interest, had his Hands been Industrious, and had he not let so many fair *Opportunities* slip out of them. If any thing can spur up such an improvident and restiff Creature, by vigorous Courses to *Redeem the Time* that is gone from him, the Sense of this must. And if Men were as heartily concern'd for *Spiritual*, as they are for these external, transitory Matters, they would hardly need any other Perswasions to *Redeem their Time*, but this single Consideration, *What Debtors they are to their own Souls*; and *what great Arrears they are in unto themselves*. Since they came into the World capable of any Impressions, and lived out the days of their Child hood in a State of perfect Innocence; (comparatively) *What Proficients, in Religion and Vertue,* might

might they have been, by that time they came of Age, had they not dropt their precious Time with their Trifles and Toys? And since they had the same equal advantage with *Timothy*, of knowing the *Holy Scriptures* from their Child-hood, they might have been wise unto *Salvation* betimes too, had they spent their days in chewing over, and digesting those wholesome Doctrines, wherein *Timothy* was careful to be nourished up, 1 *Tim.* 4. 6. Many Vices might have been destroyed upon their first appearance, like *Cockatrices* crusht in the Egg. *Passion* would have met with an early check. *Meekness*, *Patience*, *Humility*, *Charity*, and a devout *Temper*, would not have been scorn'd, as *Phlegmatick* and ungenerous Dispositions. *Conscience*, which is now prostituted to *Lust*, would have been preserved in a pure and undefiled State: Vast Improvements might have been made, had People but made a good use of their Time.

The only way therefore they have now to Redeem it, is to recover of their Losses as much as they can; and that with all possible speed; because the longer this Care is deferred, the greater still their Losses are; like Debts, which every day swell by being neglected. Wicked Habits grow daily, and are more and more confirmed by Pleasure and Custom, till the Ear becomes deaf, and the Heart hardned. There is a Suecession
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of Follies, as there is of Years. When the *Rattle* is thrown away, *Vanity* is taken up; and *Vice* takes the next turn. Thus the *Youth* commenceth a Son of *Belial*; and proceeds by degrees from the Womb towards Hell; unless some surprising Judgments meet him in the way, to give him a stop, after many Prayers and Counsels of Friends that have been used in vain. By this course of Life, Vice is reckoned in the end one of the Accomplishments of a Man; and when once it comes to be grave, to act with Seriousness, Deliberation, and Designs, it is infinitely harder to be conquered, then it was in the days of innocent Ignorance; consequently the hurt and mischief which is done to the poor Soul by a long Trade of Wickedness, is inexpressible; and therefore Men should Redeem their *Time* while they have it to Redeem, and while the thing is practicable; for the longer it runs, the more it will be out of their Power; their *Time* is still less and less, yet their Vices increase and wax the stronger; and their Minds are every day the more stiff and inflexible; So that when old Age comes, there is a crookedness within, which is far worse then that in the Bones; and 'tis to be fear'd, that a Death bed Repentance is seldom genuine and sincere, after a long Life of *Impiety*.

Sometimes it happens, that instead of Repenting, People are ready to despair; believing that after so much *Time* quite mis-

mis-spent, the poor remainder is too little, and too late for the beginning of a great Work, when ones course is now finishing. The thought of this is like an heavy Misfortune, which a Man knows not how to bear up against. His Heart sinks under the pressure, and he gives over all Endeavors; because he thinks no Labor or Means will be to purpose, especially when *Attempts* have been altogether ineffectual and fruitless. This is a sad consequence of the loss of *Time*, when it thus terminates in Horror and Dampness. And yet, though the thing be evil, the case is not uncommon; and considering the Danger that is so visible before all negligent People, one would think the very fear of what may be, should stir them up to make provision against Futurity, by well husbanding the Present. We may be sure, the Remembrance of so much *Time Lost*, must needs be very uncomfortable in that day, when Mens Consciences are wont to speak home and plain. Suppose ones Heart be truly Penitent, it cannot but afford him a very melancholy Prospect, to look back upon his former Life, and to see what a long Course he has run to sad purpose: How many fair Opportunities of doing good have been baulk'd; how little Religion hath been minded (tho' it be the great thing for which we were all brought into the World;) How many Motions of Gods *Holy Spirit* have been resisted; How many *Mercies* have been abused;

sed ; How often private Affairs have been preferred to the *Divine Service* ; How many hours have been trifled away, which should have been imployed at Gods House ; How many Sins have been acted, when the Works of *Salvation* should, and might have been look'd after ; in short, how Vice and Vanity, and Idleness have divided that Time, which God had a right to, and which the Soul might have fared happily by, had it not been in a wicked Mans keeping. Intemperance, Lust, Pride, Quarreling, studying how to defraud, and to do Mischief, robbeth away a great part of some Mens Lives ; and worldly Interest is the common Thief, till improvident Wretches see their Graves ready to open, to receive at last so many publick Nufances, and so many Burdens upon the Earth. These must needs be very melancholy Considerations to those whose Eyes Death is a closing ; especially if their Consciences are yet awake. And therefore People should be wise in time, because it is impossible for any of us to know, what the issues of a Death bed will be, or what our Condition will prove then. *The Time past of our Life may suffice us to have wrought the Will of the Gentiles, saith St. Peter, 1 Pet. 4. 3.* And thus every one of us should conclude, the time past of our Life may suffice us to have followed the Works of the Flesh, and the Vanities of the World. God knows, there are few, who have not lost too much of this kind already ; and, if
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instead of *Recovering*, Men go on still to multiply their Losses, 'twill be a sad Account they must come to at last, when they shall cast up their Dammmages, and their Acquests, and shall be made to consider what a long Season they have fool'd away, and gotten nothing by it in the end, but a wounded Conscience, and a most terrible Prospect.

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C H A P. III.

*How irreparable this Loss will be
in another Life.*

THough this alone be a great Consideration, yet in comparison of what follows, it is little to be valued. For whatever our Losses are now, as long as we have some time yet left us, we may make our selves some sort of Reparation. But a Time is coming, which we should always provide against, (the great cause of our trifling away so many precious hours, is, because we do not think so much and so often as we should of that Time) when, notwithstanding the intimate Affection that is now between them, the Soul must be divorced from the Body, and live in a separate State till the general Judgment-day. *The Dust shall return to the Earth as it was ; and the Spirit shall return to God who gave it, Eccles. 12. 7.* It shall return unto God to receive its Sentence for the Works done in the Body ; and according as those Works have been, whether good or evil, so will its State be assigned it, either of Happiness or misery. And whatever that State be, it
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will be utterly *unchangeable*. There can be no Reviving, till the Resurrection; no returning upon the Earth any more; no living over our Lives again, to rectifie any one Miscarriage; no recalling a Minute, to drop a Tear, or to cry for Pardon. *There is* (saith Job) *some hope of a Tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease, though the root thereof wax old in the Earth, and the Stock thereof dye in the Ground; yet through the scent of Water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a Plant. But a Man dieth, and wasteth away; yea, Man giveth up the Ghost, and where is he? As the Waters fail from the Sea, and the Flood decayeth and dryeth up, so Man lieth down, and riseth not, till the Heavens be no more; They shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep, Job 14.* This Consideration then is the *second Motive* to quicken us all to *Redeem our Time*, because the loss of it at the end of this Life will be irreparable, seeing it is impossible for us to come out of our Graves again to order *Time* better then we are suppos'd to have done: We are deeply concerned to double our Diligence about it now, before it is past *Redemption*. As yet it is not too late; but it will certainly be so, when once we are dead: Our Works will follow us into another World; but it would be madness to think we may begin them there. which way soever our Souls go, we must

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necessarily be Losers, by losing our *Time* here.

Our Saviour tells us of a *broad Way that leadeth to Destruction*, Mat. 7. 13. And such as go that way, are beyond all possibility of *Redeeming their Time*, or of being *Redeemed* themselves, when once they arrive at the end of their sad Journey. *Hell* indeed was prepared for the *Punishment* of the *Devil* and his *Angels*; and revealed to Men for their *Terror*; that the sight of it might turn their *Desires* towards *Heaven*, and frighten them into an eagerness of taking Sanctuary there, whither Promises alone would hardly allure sordid and brutish Appetites. But if after such proffers of infinite Happiness, some will be so improvident and head-strong, as to make that their Option, which is the Devils Curse, they can blame none but themselves for being at last without hope of Recovery. *There the Worm dieth not, and the Fire is not quenched*, as our Saviour assures us thrice together, Mar. 9. 44, 46, 48. Elsewhere it is called, *Fire unquenchable*, Mat. 3. 12. *Fire Everlasting*, Mat. 25. 41. *Fire Eternal*, Jude 7. which is enough to prove the interminable duration of *Hell-Torments*, against those hardy Wretches, who would fain dispute them away, instead of endeavouring to prevent them. This is to study how to throw away two things which hang heavy upon them, their *Time* and their *Faith* too; though
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the loss of either will be enough to make them miserable. Perhaps the loss of *Time* is the greatest, because it goes first; Infidelity and other Wickedness being the Results of the loss of *Time*, or that which is the consequent of hours mis-employed. There are some Creatures which believe and tremble; and those Sons of Perdition who bear them Company in weeping and wailing, and gnashing of Teeth, would give all the World, if they had it at command, for a few of those days which many are so weary of, that they think of Methods, how to drive away their *Time*: some by Idleness; some by Pride; some by Quarreling; some by Lust; some by Intemperance; most by Vanity. Those Portions of *Time*, how large soever they be, which Living-men so little regard, those forlorn Souls which have abandoned themselves to damnation, by not fore-casting what now they feel, would think little enough to bestow upon Fastings, and Prayers, and Acts of Charity; upon Expressions of Humility, and Self-denial; upon the severest Mortifications; upon Sufferings of any sorts (excepting their suffering the loss of *Time*) they would be glad, though but of a few *Minutes*, instead of our *Years*, to try if there might be any the least room for *Repentance*. The Soul doth not forfeit its Essential Faculties, by being parted from the Flesh. It retaineth still Understanding, Memory, Will,

and Affections ; such I mean, as are suitable to its State. Hope then can be none, when once it is come to the final Possession of its Fortunes. And yet, thus much may be gathered from the Parabolical Account our Saviour gave of *Abraham*; and the rich Man, *Luk. 16*, That though the State of the Blessed, and the State of the Damned be immutably fixt on each hand by a *Chasm*, or the irrevocable Decree of God, so that the damned have not any Hope for *Themselves* ; yet they have so much Charity, even in *Hell*, as to wish that their surviving Friends may not come into a Place, where they themselves endure such exquisite Torments. And what would not such Souls do on their own behalf, might they have some fresh time given them to bestow upon *Moses*, and the *Prophets* ? To be sure they would part with all their *Torments* for one single day ; and yet year after year is now wasted, I do not say, in unprofitable, but in ungodly and wicked Courses. What Nature doth not require, to supply its wants, *Vice* appropriates a great share of ; though the *World* commonly goes away with the greatest part ; and that very small Portion which is left for Offices of Religion, is spent often after such a superficial and careless manner, that that too may be reckoned among Mens idle Expences, when a Messenger of Satan comes to deprive them of all, and to shut them under an utter impossibility of

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of ever returning back to Redeem an Hour.

Again, the Son of God tells us of a *strait Gate, and a narrow way, which leadeth unto Life*, Mat. 7. 14. Now though in that blessed State every faithful Christian will be crowned for all his Labors and Travels, and Sufferings under the Sun ; yet in Heaven it self he will find some detriment by not Redeeming his Time here with that Diligence and Vigor which he should have used. To speak in St. Paul's Words, though he spake them in reference to Trials and Persecutions in this Life, 1 Cor. 3. 15. *Such a Man shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved.* For, as there are Degrees of Torments in Hell, some beaten with fewer, and some with many Stripes, as they have squandred away their Time here less or more ; so there are degrees of Felicities in Heaven , as Men have employed their Opportunities in this World, well, or better. This inequality of Happiness our Saviour sufficiently intimates, *by the many Mansions which he saith are in his Fathers House*, Jo. 14. 2. The Words in the Prophet Daniel are exprefs ; *They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the Firmament ; and they that turn many to Righteousness, as the Stars for ever and ever*, Dan. 12. 3. The Words of St. Paul are to the like purpose ; *There is one Glory of the Sun, another Glory of the Moon, and another of the Stars ; for one Star differeth from another Star in Glory : So also is the*

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and Affections ; such I mean, as are suitable to its State. Hope then can be none, when once it is come to the final Possession of its Fortunes. And yet, thus much may be gathered from the Parabolical Account our Saviour gave of *Abraham*, and the rich Man, *Luk 16*, That though the State of the Blessed, and the State of the Damned be immutably fixt on each hand by a *Chasm*, or the irrevocable Decree of God, so that the damned have not any Hope for *Themselves* ; yet they have so much Charity, even in *Hell*, as to wish that their surviving Friends may not come into a Place, where they themselves endure such exquisite Torments. And what would not such Souls do on their own behalf, might they have some fresh time given them to bestow upon *Moses*, and the *Prophets* ? To be sure they would part with all their *Torments* for one single day ; and yet year after year is now wasted, I do not say, in unprofitable, but in ungodly and wicked Courses. What Nature doth not require, to supply its wants, *Vice* appropriates a great share of ; though the *World* commonly goes away with the greatest part ; and that very small Portion which is left for Offices of Religion, is spent often after such a superficial and careless manner, that that too may be reckoned among Mens idle Expences, when a Messenger of Satan comes to deprive them of all, and to shut them under an utter impossibility
of

Redeeming of Time.

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of ever returning back to Redeem an Hour.

Again, the Son of God tells us of a *strait Gate, and a narrow way, which leadeth unto Life*, Mat. 7. 14. Now though in that blessed State every faithful Christian will be crowned for all his Labors and Travels, and Sufferings under the Sun ; yet in Heaven it self he will find some detriment by not Redeeming his *Time* here with that Diligence and Vigor which he should have used. To speak in *St. Paul's Words*, though he spake them in reference to Trials and Persecutions in this Life, 1 Cor. 3. 15. *Such a Man shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved.* For, as there are Degrees of Torments in Hell, some beaten with fewer, and some with many Stripes, as they have squandred away their Time here less or more ; so there are degrees of Felicities in Heaven , as Men have employed their Opportunities in this World, well, or better. This inequality of Happiness our Saviour sufficiently intimates, *by the many Mansions which he saith are in his Fathers House*, Jo. 14. 2. The Words in the Prophet Daniel are express ; *They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the Firmament ; and they that turn many to Righteousness, as the Stars for ever and ever*, Dan. 12. 3. The Words of *St. Paul* are to the like purpose ; *There is one Glory of the Sun, another Glory of the Moon, and another of the Stars ; for one Star differeth from another Star in Glory : So also is the*
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the Resurrection of the Dead, 1 Cor. 15. 41, 42. The Apostles words elsewhere are beyond exception, He which soweth sparingly, shall reap sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully, shall reap bountifully, 2 Cor. 9. 6. Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own Labour, 1 Cor. 3. 8. From which places of Scripture it is clear, that tho all Rewards at the hand of God be, not of Debt, but of pure Bounty, yet in the distribution of them the Divine Majesty is pleased to make a difference between one Man and another, and to reward every one according to the Quality and Measure of their Works. And hence it follows, that even such as Love the Lord Jesus in Sincerity, will Gain or Lose in the other World, proportionably as they bestow their precious Hours in this. They will have indeed the same most Blessed God to Contemplate, Love and Adore; the same sorts and kinds of happiness to enjoy; the same uninterrupted and Eternal Duration of it; and every Soul will be Replenished with that Portion, which the undeserved goodness of God shall dispense: But yet there will be various measures of Bliss, tho it may be impossible for us now to express the manner of the inequality, because Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, neither hath it entred into the Heart of Man to conceive the things, which God hath prepared for them that love him. 1 Cor. 2. 9. 'Tis very probable, that the different degrees of Glory will be answerable to mens different Capacities; and as their Love to God now

is

is less or more Perfect, according as those heights of Affection are, which we attain to here; and according as the Powers of the Soul are improved and Exalted in this Militant State, so will they still be Raised and Perfected in Heaven; and consequently the greater Measures of Happiness we shall be capable of there. Hence it is, that Martyrs are believed to be the nearest unto Christ in Heaven, and to excel other Saints in Glory, because by the more abundant Largeness of their Hearts in this Life, they were prepared to receive more abundant Degrees: and those Converts who came later into the Vine-yard than others did, reach unto an equal pitch with them, if, like *St. Paul*, they make such vast improvements by their extraordinary Vigour and Zeal, as to overtake in their Labours such as endured the Heat of the day. However we pretend to unfold the Manner and Reason of the thing, it is evident that in *Fact* there are several degrees of Happiness, and that every one receiveth according to his Works.

This shews how infinitely we are concern'd to redeem our time with all possible industry, not onely that we may be deliver'd from the everlasting Pains of a *Future life*; but *moreover*, that we may not miss of those great Hopes, or come short of those Expectations, we comfort our selves with now. Every man finds by experience, what an affliction it is to be disappointed

appointed ; especially where the hopes were strong, and the enjoyments desired, of great consequence. And though the faculties of the Soul will be so rectified in a *state of Perfection*, that Heaven can be no place for *dejecting* and *macerating* griefs ; yet I cannot conceive, but the sense of former neglects must bring with it an Abatement of those *transcendent Joys*, which otherwise would have been attainable. Nay, were there any room for a *Sorrowful Repentance* in those blessed *Regions* above, the Saints there would *repent* of nothing more, then of the loss of their time here, because it is the occasion of those *Faults* and *Follies*, which do set even *Sincere Penitents* in a *Lower Classis*, than those who lived in an *uninterrupted* course of virtue and Piety.

The summ is ; that we should manage our *Expences* of time with all pious and prudent *Frugality* ; as being the most *precious* thing in this *world*, and as that which will *terminate* at last in an *Immutable state*, where we shall *certainly* be savers or losers to all *eternity*, as we Redeem, or not Redeem now. And would to God people would but set aside some, though it were but a small, part of every day to think what *Eternity* imports ; and what it is to live without any end, without the least *Expectation*, or Possibility of an end. Men would fain be *Immortal here* ; and act so unconcernedly, as if there were never to be an end of their follies ; of which this is one of the *greatest*, and
the

the most *Palpable* : For dye we must in our respective turns ; and as sure as death, *Judgement* will follow ; and as the sentence is then, so will every ones lot hold on to *Eternal* ages, without ever coming to a *Period*. Considering therefore how *unchangeable* our state will be, whether in woe or bliss, and how our *Everlasting* fortunes depend upon the use we make of our time now, we are *infinitely* concern'd to Redeem what is lost with a very quick hand, lest our losses prove utterly and unexpectedly *Irrecoverable* ; the time here is short, at the best : The Pleasures of sin are but for a season : The world passeth away *gradually* ; people every day go away *before* it, and a few feet of Earth will in a little time serve to *immure* the most *Insatiable* and *Troublesome* man that is in it now. It would be a wise thing to look *forward* ; and to *consider*, in what a little space there will be an end of a mans sins and *vanities* here. In a few years *Posterity*, to be sure, will see a vast *Alteration* ; there, the *Haughty* head laid *Low* ; there, the *Unconscionable* Oppressors cut down ; there, the *Luxurious* thrown to nourish and fatten worms ; there, the Lustful brought to his *Final Rottenness* ; there, the *wanton* eye closed ; there the mouth of the *Prophanest* Blasphemer is stopt ; and there, a full end put to *vicious courses* here ; in all which time the souls of those *miserable* wretches are gone off, with an *Eternity* of Guilt upon them, to an *Eternity* of Punishment ; which we should

should lay close to our hearts, could we see the *Passages* and *Sufferings* of spirits, as we do *Bodies*, when they are carried upon mens *shoulders* to their graves. And yet considering, what we are told in our *Creed*, as to a future state, and how *Infallible Divine Revelation* is, because it cometh from God, who *knoweth* all things, and cannot possibly deceive, or be deceived; *methinks* nothing can quicken our *endeavours* to Redeem our time so much, as this sole *Reflection*, what will become of us at the Last: but that men are generally *Fools*, in making such *unequal comparisons*, as to set contingencies against *Certainties*; and indeed to Prefer a few *moments* before an *Eternity*.

CHAP. IV.

How dangerous the loss of time is, in reference to our present, outward fortunes.

BUT besides all this, we are to consider, as the third motive, what may very Probably befall us even *before* we go to our Long homes, if we be not solicitous in time to Redeem our *Lost hours*. It is a Loss, that may be very dangerous in reference to our present *outward fortunes*. For the illustration of this matter we are to note, that God determines upon his time, when he will make *Careless* and *Incorrigible* people *Examples* of his *Justice* in this world. Though it be one of those secret things which belong unto the Lord our God, yet the holy Scripture gives us warrant to believe, that such a fix't time there is, when he visits *Negligent* peoples offences with a Rod, and their sins with *Scourges*; especially this sin, the mis-spending those days and hours, which he is pleased to allot them for works of *Piety* and *Righteousness*. Gods purpose concerning the old world was, that their days should be an *hundred and twenty years*, *Gen. 6. 3.* which is
not

not to be *understood* so, as if he intended to contract peoples lives by shortning the usual term of *Nature*, which in those ages was very long: but that he would in six score years put an end to the world that then was, and destroy all but eight persons by a flood, unless they did Repent of those great wickednesses, by Reason whereof it grieved God at the heart, that he had made man on the earth, *Gen. 6. 6.* It is observable, that our Blessed Saviour speaking of a terrible Judgment, that after his ascension would come upon the unbelieving Jews; and directing his disciples to strict vigilance, for fear they too should be surpriz'd and destroyed with the rest, makes use of this very instance as a powerful argument to make them watchful; *Mat. 24. 37, 38, 39.* 'As the days of *Noah* were, 'so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be: for as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, 'untill the days that *Noah* entred into the 'Ark; and knew (or; Considered) not untill the flood came and took them all away, 'so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Which shews, that the great cause of the general deluge was, the general sin of people in squandring away their *pretious* time upon Pleasures, Riots and Debauchery, when God hath set them their Bounds, beyond which he resolves they should not live any longer. The Time God pitched
upon

upon for the Destruction of the *Amorites*, was the *Fourth Generation* from the Days of *Abraham*, *Gen. 15. 16.* That he sent to *Nineveh* was forty Days, *Jonah 3. 4.* And by the History it appears, that the space fixed for the Destruction of the *Jews* after the Lord Jesus his departure, was forty years; the time that had been spent in bringing their Ancestors into the Possession of the Promised Land. The intermediate space before their Overthrow, is called *Jerusalems Day*, *Luke 19. 42.* O that thou (*Jerusalem*) hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy Peace! Gods day was to be the next; a day of Horror and Vengeance, that presently came upon *Jerusalem*, as soon as she had Trifled and sinned away her Own.

By these few instances it appears, that God determines upon a certain Time, when he will Punish People Remarkably, if they do not Prevent his Judgments by Redeeming the Time, while it is yet called, *To day.* Whence it followeth, that could men be so Foolish as to disbelieve a Future State, their present welfare would require them to Redeem their Time; because the more they Procrastinate, and the longer they defer that necessary Work, so many degrees the day of Temporal Vengeance approacheth; and the nearer that draweth towards them, and the more steps they take to meet it, the more imminent still is the danger of dropping into unexpected Ruin. This was *St. Pauls*

own Argument for the Redeeming of Time, because (saith he) *The days are Evil*, Eph. 5. 16. By Evil days the Scripture sometimes meaneth *Old Age*, and days of *Infirmity*: And so Solomon speaks, *Eccles. 12. 1. Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy Youth, while the evil days come not.* And indeed 'tis a proper Admonition for People in that Case, to make a nimble use of their Time, to accelerate their Course, and every day to make the quicker and quicker dispatches; like Bodies, whose motion is the swifter and stronger, the nearer they come to their place of Rest. But by *Evil days* the Apostle means, times of *Peril* and *Danger*; and when any Juncture is threatening, it is high time for People to be on the Redeeming hand; because God hath set *His Day*, if they do not bestow *theirs* as he would have them.

When they Act with that Zeal, Honesty, and Circumspection, which becomes those who are certain otherwise to be quite undone, then the Rod is laid up, and the Visitation is put off to another day; and so on still; the farther and farther it is deferred, the more Industrious they go on, and persevere in *Well-doing*. For God's Menaces are conditional; he doth always reserve to himself a power of Revocation, and still exerts it by delivering Men from danger, as they do their part in answering the great Ends of the Sentence. When they Redeem their Time, God Redeems
Them

Them and their Fortunes from Destruction, and then he is said to Repent of the Evil: 'Tis spoken after the manner of Men, in condescension to our Capacities; when upon our due Reformation he Removes a Judgment, which he intended otherwise to bring upon us. At what instant I shall speak concerning a Nation, and concerning a Kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; *If that Nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their Evil, I will repent of the Evil, that I thought to do unto them,* Jer. 18 7, 8. Upon this Account, the Apostles Argument, taken from the Consideration of dangerous Circumstances, is of great force; because Self-preservation is the first Principle of Nature, and that which too often works even against Principles of Religion; but when Religion comes to assist it, by shewing People the Vengeance of God over their Heads, it serves to set all hands at work upon the Redeeming of Time, to prevent a Storm, wherein otherwise they are likely to perish. Many that are contented to run the hazards of another Life, are very unwilling to lose the Comforts of this, because they love the Present, and their Senses are too strong for Faith, which is the Substance of things not seen, but hoped for, Heb. 11. 1. Therefore when present dangers are thoroughly apprehended, Endeavors to avoid them will naturally follow. In such a case, People will no more lose Time, then they will lye in their

Beds, if they know the House is ready to be burnt. Now, as certain as Natural Causes work, so certain it is, that Judgments will overtake those who care not how vainly and wickedly they spend their days. It is that which seals Men up to Destruction, as it did the *Sodomites*; amongst whose Iniquities, abundance of *Idleness* is reckoned as one, *Ezek.* 17. 49. that which drew on a great many Wickednesses more, and at last turned the whole City into a great Globe of Fire. Therefore when the Hand of God in the least appears, it is an awakening Argument for us all to rise from our Security, and to Redeem the Time, while we have as yet any Opportunities left us; For the longer we defer this Business, the harder God will be to be intreated; till in the end he will become utterly inexorable. This seems to be clear from the Parallel, which the Apostle draweth from the Case of *Esau*, *Heb.* 12. 17. *For a Morfel of Meat he sold his Birth right, and afterwards lost his Fathers Blessing by Hunting.* Jacob made such an use of his Brothers Absence, and of his own Time, that he gat the Blessing from him. *Esau* would have recovered it, but was rejected, because he came too late. *He found* (saith the Apostle) *no Place of Repentance, though he sought carefully with Tears*; meaning that he could not perswade his Father to Repent of what he had done, so as to alter his Mind, and to recal the thing that had gone out of his Lips.

This

This instance the *Apostle* makes use of as a Reason, why we should take heed lest we fail of the grace of God, or forfeit our title to his merciful *Protection*; which yet would be of no force, nor indeed to the purpose, if it were not possible for us to fare as ill as *Esau* did. But *St. Pauls* words shew, that though God be a God of *Patience* and long suffering, yet there is a time when he will stay no longer for those who turn his Grace into wantonness; when he will be deaf to their cries; and will not be prevailed with to Repent of the evil that he hath pronounced against them. I now speak of such evils as God brings upon men in *this* life; where Punishments are Exemplary; inflicted upon people for good; for the *Correction* of improvident people themselves, and for the *admonition* of all. The pains of another world are purely *Vindictive*; and such as are both Remediless and Endless; and therefore God leaves room for mercy to the very Last hour of life, when Repentance on our part is hearty and sincere: witness the acceptance that penitent thief upon the Cross found; whose case, though it was Particular, and not to be drawn into example so as to encourage any wretches to throw away their time upon presumption of mercy at the Last; yet it argues plainly, that at what hour soever a Sinner turneth from his evil way: he shall save his Soul alive. But this doth not always save people from Punishments here; especially such People, as have long *Abus-*

ed the Patience and Goodness of God. To this purpose, we may observe what was said of *Jerusalem*, *Luk. 19. 42.* that the things which belonged unto her peace were hidden from her eyes; and the Reason of it is given *v. 44* *because she knew not the time of her visitation*; that is, she did not consider her own great interest in time; she would not lay the things belonging to her peace to Heart, notwithstanding so many calls, first from the Prophets that had been sent to her, and at Last from the mouth of the Son of God himself, the Lord of life and Glory. The Result of this is, that people may quite Sin away their day of Peace; and because the more time they lose, the greater their dangers are, they should be very diligent while they have fair opportunities; while there is a *Season, an accepted time, a day of salvation.* Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, saith the Prophet, *Isa. 55. 6.* Call upon him while he is near; intimateing clearly, that there is a critical Juncture, when he will not be found, but keep off at a great distance, though he be sought after. And to this purpose are these following Texts of Scripture, *Prov. 1. 24. &c.* *Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my Reproof; I also will Laugh at your Calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as Desolation, and your Destruction^o cometh as a whirl-*

whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you : Then shall they call upon me, but will not answer, they shall seek me early, but shall not find me. *Iſa.* 65. 12. Therefore will I number you to the sword, and ye shall all bow down to the slaughter, because when I called, ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear, but did evil before mine eyes, and did chuse that wherein I delighted not. And *Iſa.* 7. 15, 16. I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, even the whole seed of Ephraim; therefore pray thou not for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me; for I will not hear thee.

From these several places it appears, that Gods decrees, which in the beginning were Conditional, at length come to be Peremptory; and that sentence to be Final and Irrevocable, which was originally designed not for mens Destruction, but for their amendment: and because this proceeds from the mis-spending those hours, which God numbred out unto us all, that we may do the world and our own Souls good, it narrowly concerns us to Redeem our time, before it be too Late. To day if you will hear his voice; harden not your hearts, saith the Psalmist; as if the deferring of it to another day were a ready course to harden our own spirits and to make God silent to all our cries in the day of vengeance. This is your hour, and the power of darkness, as Christ told those malicious wretches, *Luk.* 22. 53. But Gods power will take its turn, when his

own time cometh : and because of that day and hour knoweth no man, but it is wont to steal upon Improvident people when they look not for it, nor are aware of it, we should be every minute, watchful and Ready, by Improving the time *Present* to the best advantage. Who can tell *what a day will bring forth?* Or what shall be *on the morrow?* and considering, how uncertain this world is, and how *Cross* events usually prove, whatever we *Project* or *hope* for, we should not let any blessed opportunities slip away, nor be *Loytering* about, while the main business stays for us, lest sudden destruction come upon us, as travail upon a woman with child, while we say, *Peace and safety*, like those foolish people St. Paul speaks of, *1 Thes. 5, 3.*

And would God we of this Kingdom would seriously lay this thing to heart, while the great Goodness of God towards us doth yet endure ! Though we are as apt, as any Nation, to flatter our selves with promises of Peace and safety ; especially considering how many years experience we have had of Gods merciful, and indeed miraculous Providence over us ; yet we cannot but discern what dangers threaten the whole Kingdom at this time ; and it is to be wish'd, that that time which some trifle away in murmurings and Complaints, we would all of us be perswaded to employ upon acts of unfeigned Repentance, that God may be intreated for us, before his arm is stretched out to cut us off in the midst of our security. As we have lost time,

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so Gods Judgements have gained ground; nor is there any other way left us now, but to recover what we can of our Losses by making a Quick use of the Remainder, according to the *Laws of Religion*, and true Christian Prudence. Should such *desolation* and distress be brought upon us, which some other Nations groan under, it will be too late to say, we did not imagine that things would have come to this pass. We have, God knows, little reason to think, we are better than other people. If we were not worse, our hopes of safety might be the better grounded. But by how much *Atheism* and *Irreligion* go beyond *superstition*, by so much are our provocations greater, and our sins the more crying and importunate, to bring down that vengeance, which we see hovering over our heads. Therefore, the wisest, and the most effectual course, we can take to prevent our Ruine is, to lay hold on those fair *opportunities* we have, before they are out of our reach, and to redeem the time while God is yet pleased to give us Leave.

The Promises being duly and thoroughly consider'd, will, I hope, be able enough to carry your thoughts on to the last great enquiry; viz. How we may order the matter, so as to Redeem our time to very good purpose?

In order hereunto these five things are necessary:

First

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First, to Kindle and preserve in our hearts a true Christian Zeal.

Secondly, to consider what sins we have acted, and to make all possible amends for them.

Thirdly, to do all the good we can :

Fourthly, to let no day slip away wholly, without *promoting* our eternal interest in some degree and measure.

And Fifthly, to spend as much as may be of the Remainder of our time upon *Devotion* ; especially upon the *Solemnities* of Publick Devotion in the *house of God*.

CHAP V.

*The way to Redeem our time is, first,
to Kindle and preserve in our
hearts a true Christian Zeal.*

1. **T**HE First course to be taken is, to
Kindle and Preserve in our hearts
a *True Christian Zeal*. By a true Christian
Zeal I understand, a *Warm and well Govern-*
ed Resolution to act according to Christ's
Laws. For there are two sorts of Zeal
which are *Faulty*. One, is that which is not
according to *Knowledge*, as *St. Paul* tells us,
Rom. 10. 2. a blind Passion, or Impetus that
hurries all before it upon *Presumptions* and
mistakes; and without a deliberate *Calm*
Examination of the true merits of the Cause.
Such a Zeal was his *Own*, while he yet
breathed out threatnings and slaughter
against the disciples of the Lord. *He verily*
thought, that he was bound to do many things con-
trary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth, Act.
26. 9. This was his *mistaken Zeal*; and there-
fore he obtained mercy afterwards, because,
what he had done, he did *Ignorantly in un-*
belief, Tim. 1. 3. There is another sort of
Zeal which is not according to *Sobriety*;

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an Inordinate heat of mind, and that too mis-applied, upon objects that are not so proper; though the mans Judgment be right and sound : when Zeal is employed about minute matters in *comparison*; about the circumstantial, and petite Appendages, rather than about the essentials of *Religion* : Such a Zeal was theirs, who were strict and nice about *Mint*, *Anis*, and *Cummin*, but omitted the weightier matters of the Law, Righteousness, mercy, and Faith; these things ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone, saith our Saviour, *Math. 23. 23*. Our Zeal should be attended with *Light*, as well as *Warmth*; with Regularity, and due Application, as well as fervency; and then 'tis a well governed Zeal; a *Disposition* made up of a right Principle, and of due temper and Prudence.

Now such a sober earnestness of mind is absolutely necessary in order to the Redeeming of our time, because it is the source and spring of action; the natural principle of all vigorous performances; without which we shall be so far from *doubling* our diligence, that we shall express *none at all*; but indulge our selves with the sluggard, *Pro. 6. 10*. A *Requiem* is all he minds; he makes his life literally a *Dream*; yet a *little sleep*, a *little slumber*, a *little more folding of the hands to sleep*. A bed is an improper place to Redeem time; which slides away there *insensibly*; and a spirit of slumber, and an active mind, are as great contradictions

ditions, as Rest and work are. There must be at least, such a principle of Zeal in this case, as there is of Industry in other cases; a principle that stirs people up to their Business and Pleasures in their *common* course of life. They that love the *World*, begrudge no time they lay out upon it; but rise up early, sit up late, and eat the bread of sorrows, *Psal.* 107. 2. The reason is; because they have an inordinate and sordid Zeal for *Mammon*; it is that inward Principle that makes them Restless, and takes away from them the general comforts of mankind; though for the sake of the world they count that stealth no manner of Robbery. The *Voluptuous* care not how many hours they throw away upon the Pleasures of sin. They wait for the Twilight, *Pro.* 7. 9. *They tarry long at the wine, Prov.* 23. 30. They rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink, and continue until night, till it inflames them, *Isa.* 5. 11. In short; whatever peoples hearts are set upon, they will be sure to follow with *Industry* and *eagerness*; and the true Reason, why they are so sparing of their time in the business of Religion, is because they want such a *Principle* of vigour as makes them profuse and Prodigal in other cases. Hence it is, that the Bed or the Belly rob the Closet, because their minds are not there, that sports and pastime go away with those hours, which meditation should take up; and that such portions of the day are bestowed

flowed upon vanity and vice, which should be expended upon *Prayer*. Hence it is too, that the House of God is so neglected; that the *Altar* is past by, when all things are ready but peoples Hearts; and that they think it long till the Sabbath be over, as those *Jews* did, *Amos* 8. 5. The Reason of all this is, because they are Lovers of other things, more then of God, or Religion, or their own eternal Happiness; there is not that true Christian Zeal, which would render all these things a *Delight*, at least would represent them as *Duties*, instead of counting them a *Burden*. As long as men slight Religion, or are cold and Indifferent about it, we cannot expect they should Redeem their time to any Good purpose. To quicken and stir up all our minds for that weighty matter, we should warm our hearts with a brisk and enlivening sense of our duty, and of the Consequents which depend upon it; we should call to mind the vast advantages which shall be the reward of a *good Conscience*, and the Present pleasures which inseparably attend a godly, righteous, and sober life. We should often reflect upon the vain, Empty, Perishing condition of all *Worldly* matters; that after all our Arts and *Labours* for them, we must leave them all Behind, and can carry nothing away, but our *Consciences* and works; we should daily consider, that we must all dye, and after Death go to Judgement; and think with our selves, what terrible times those will be; what a

Preci-

Redeeming of Time

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Precious thing an Immortal Soul is ; how unchangeable its state will be hereafter, whether it be in misery or Bliss ; and what a *Foolish* thing 'twill be to Lose it though it were for the Gaining of ten thousand worlds now. We should consider with all, what cares are necessary for the saving of a Soul ; How many things we are to do, and what Little time we have to do them all in ; How our days pass away like a shadow ; how very *uncertain* the *shortness* of them is ; how many accidents there are to cut us off before Nature hath spun out her work to the Full ; of what *dangerous consequence* Delays are ; what a dismal thing it will be to be surpriz'd on a sudden ; and how Contingent the issues of Repentance may be, though any ill man be permitted to lye long upon his sick bed, with Friends and Prayers about him.

These and the like *Religious* meditations, if rightly entertain'd, will be apt, to inspire us with warm *Resolutions*, to Redeem our time, while it is yet in our hand ; to make us *Cautious* of Losing a day more ; and to invigorate our souls with such an hearty principle as will render us, not onely *Diligent*, but very *Zealous* and *Eager* in a Christian course, which puts me in mind of the *vigorous Resolutions* of that great *Apostle* St. Paul ; whose indefatigable Industry and Zeal to Redeem the time he had Lost, is a Noble pattern for ours, *Phil.* 3. 12, 13, 14. *I follow after*, saith he, *forgetting those things*

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things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before; I press on toward the mark, for the Prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. He there compared himself to one that was running a Race, to obtain a Garland at the Mark, or Goal, or Race-end. Those which are engaged in such an Athletick Course, are not wont to stop and loiter away their Minutes, or to stand looking behind them to see what lengths and distances they have ran, and how far they have out-stript the Cumbatants that are short of them; but strive and stretch forward, each straining every Sinew to overtake and out-run the foremost, that he may receive the Prize first. And thus did St. Paul proceed with Constancy, Zeal, and Earnestness in that Spiritual Course, wherein he was a Combatant (though a late one) for a Crown that withereth not, nor fadeth away. He was on the pursuit; he made as much speed as was possible; strove hard, and went on vigorously from one labor and difficulty to another; he fetch'd up and recover'd the Time he had mis-spent, by Toiling and Working, and Traveling more abundantly than the rest; impatient Day and Night, till he had out-gone, and out-done those that had been called before him, and still pressing forward, and stretching on, for the Prize he had in his Eye, that Eternal weight
of

of Glory, which was laid up for him in the Heavens.

By this instance we see, what a warm and well govern'd Zeal is; how powerful in its Influence; what Life and Vigour it creates, and what wonderful Works it can do in a little Time, when a-Man is resolved to Redeem it indeed. And that we may follow *St. Paul's* Example, 'tis necessary to set up (as he did) a serious and obstinate Resolution, to do God Service from our *Hearts*, and our selves and others all the good we can, while we have fair Opportunities before us. Such a Christian Zeal will make Us too active and nimble in running the Race that is set before us; 'twill carry us with Patience and Constancy through All; so that no Pains will be begrudged; no thoughts of Difficulty will put us to a stand; no apprehensions of Danger will make us faint; no sense of Discouragements will cast us down; 'twill help us to go on still from Vertue to Vertue, fearful of nothing, but of losing Time; till at last we come to that great pitch *St. Paul* attained to, *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the Faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but to all them also, that love his appearing,* 2 Tim. 4. 7, 8.

C H A P. VI.

A second way is, to consider what Sins we have acted, and to make all possible amends for them.

Secondly, **T**His zealous Disposition being form'd in our Minds, the next way to Redeem our time is, to consider what *Sins we have acted, and to make all possible amends for them.* The time that is flung away upon vice is not meerly *lost*, but *consumed wickedly*; and in this case there is as much difference between losing and wasting, as there is between Idleness and mischief; or, between doing nothing at all, and doing that which is Evil. Now here the way of Redeeming ones time is, as far as 'tis possible, to undoe that which hath been done; and to perform such acts of repentance, as are declarative of our hearty wishes, that the things had never been done at all. For, to continue in a wicked Course, or, not to make some *Reparation* for a wicked Act, is a spending of time as Ill, as at the first; because it carries with it a tacit *Approbation* of mind, which is *Tantamount* to the *Committing* it again over and over. Nay, Sins continued in, or un-repent-ed, are more per-

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pernicious in their Consequence, than they were in the original ; because they harden the heart, and by degrees draw such a crusty temper upon the Conscience as makes it insensate; so that the losing of time on, is the ready means of making one incapable at last of Redeeming it at all. This shews, that by persisting in that which is evil, instead of recovering the hours that were wickedly spent, men misemploy them still, and make the matter daily worse and worse. Therefore, when an ill thing is acted, they should endeavour to obliterate it by a very speedy repentance; and the sooner they come to it, the more time and Innocence they save, and the quicker they make all Right again. An instance to this purpose we read of in the Church of Corinth, upon St. Paul's laying the Ecclesiastical Censures on those who had committed some Scandalous Enormities, 2 Cor. 7, 9, 11. *Ye were made Sorry, saith the Apostle, after a godly manner ; — And that your Sorrow, what carefulness it wrought in you ? Yea, what clearing of your selves ? Yea, what Indignation ? Yea, what Fear ? Yea, what vehement Desire ? Yea, what Zeal ? Yea, what Revenge.* That is, their speedy Repentance had such great effects upon them, that they were very Sollicitous to expiate their offences; they purged themselves presently of the crimes committed ; they express their Displeasure and vexation for the commission of them ; they were afraid of offending God any more ; they shewed all readiness to give

the Church Satisfaction for what had been done among them ; they declared their firm *Resolutions* of *Reforming* for the time to come ; and they used all possible severities, to inflict Punishment upon themselves, for the wrongs they had done their own souls, and for the Reproach they had brought upon their most holy *Profession*. This is a Right way for people to Redeem their time ; because it is in effect, to destroy and spoil the works of their hands ; to make the days perish wherein they did amiss ; and to begin their lives a new, as if those days had never been.

Though *strictly* speaking, we cannot utterly Null our works, so as to make those things never to have been, which are actually Past ; yet *Morally*, and by *Interpretation* we may Annihilate our actions, and Revoke what is gone, if our Repentance be Heartly and operative like that which those *Corinthians* express.

Now here men should examine the *Quality* and *Condition* of their crimes past, that they may redeem their time by such *Indignation* for them, and such holy revenges upon themselves as are suitable.

Some sins are *Injurious* to the Souls of the *Actors* only ; such as a man committeth alone, and by himself, without any witness of them, but his own Conscience and God. In this case the right course is, to betake ones self to Private, but sincere humiliations ; to deprecate God's wrath ; to chasten the

the Soul by Fasting and severe *mortifications*; to bestow more time than usual upon *meditation* and Prayer; to break off ones sins by Righteousness, and ones iniquities by shewing mercy to the Poor; and above all, to leave the sin, or sins, entirely off, and by the continual exercise of contrary vertues to bring the mind to a regular frame and temper. This is to undoe an Evil action, to cancel all that Guilt which is *Private, Personal, and Single*, to Recover what is past and gone, by such a moral Revocation as God will accept of, and for Christ's sake Impute to the sincere Penitent as Amends for his former miscarriages.

There are other sins which are of a more *Publick and Pestilential* nature: Sins, that besides the inward Guilt they bring upon the actors Conscience, carry along with them outward infection, mischief and scandal, as Defamation, Lying, Adultery, evil Suggestions, Injustice of all sorts, and whatever wickedness else is exemplary and hurtful to other men. These crimes are much the worse, because it is a very difficult (and sometimes impossible) matter to make full amends and satisfaction for them, (and consequently to Redeem the time they have lost; because the sin may spread so far, and may last so long in its mischievous effects, as to be out of ones Reach and Power to Recall it, so as to Null it utterly. In this case therefore the only means a man hath left him to Redeem his time is, to do what

he is *Able* towards the Revocation of his wickedness; and that must be, not only to cease from doing it any more, but *moreover* to make all possible Reparation for what hath been done already; were it only *Private, single* guilt, the Conscience might be discharged of it by those ways I mentioned just now; but considering that it is *complicated* and *aggravated* by the Additional guilt of *Injustice* and *Scandal*, much more is required to wipe it off. All possible means must be used to cure the mischievous *effects* of such criminal actions; the *Consequence* of them must be stopt, and Amends made for the hurt done before the revocation of them; because without this the whole sin cannot be undone, but is rather avowed and Continued in, and by construction and in effect Repeated every day; upon which account the wretch is so far from Redeeming his time, that he Trifles it away, and sins it on *still*; every hour of his life is Lost; his Prayers, all Lost; his very Repentance, whatever it be, is lost too, because it is so short and Imperfect; and should such a man live to a Decrepit old age, he would be as far from Gods Pardon, as when the sin was first acted; and indeed much farther, by reason of the Long, Repeated aggravation of his Guilt, by Persisting still in the wickedness, and by permitting the malignity of it to run on. For the Illustration of this matter it is necessary to put some particular cases; and they shall be

be these Four. First, if a man once corrupteth his neighbours wife, or virgin, or whatever the condition of the foolish creature be, with whom the villany is acted; it is not enough to act it no more; there is an Injury done, and that which may be irreparable and eternal; whether it will not prove so, is more than the Adulterer knows: he has done his part to damn her Reputation and her Soul too; and therefore it is not sufficient to forbear for the future, no more than it is for a Murtherer to proceed no further, when he has already given a mortal stab; in this case all possible endeavours should be used for the *Saving* of life; as in the other, all possible means must be applied for the saving of a *Soul*. Whether it shall perish or no, it is at Gods pleasure, in whose hand it is: But whatever the success may be, all ways of Reparation must be *Try'd*; otherwise the Sin is still abetted and Persisted in, till the Adulterers own Soul be past Redemption, as well as his *Time*.

Again; a Good Name is better than precious ointment, saith Solomon, *Eccl. 7. 1.* And if an enemy take it away by Libels or Lyes, nay, though it be uncharitable Truths, the wrong is manifest; nor will it suffice (though that be more than some will do) to forbear at length to throw about the Poison of an *Asp*: the *Viper* has already done his venomous work; and whether the Defamation doth stick long or no, the Guilt of it sticks upon the slanderers Conscience;

cience; there it resteth till *Satisfaction* be made for the calumny, and an effectual course be taken to set the good mans Name right again, and to Restore it to its former Savour; for as long as the stench continues, the Sin *operates*; the wretch hath still the Guilt, though he thinks it to be the *Wisdom* of the Serpent: nor is it possible for him to wipe it off, but by his Recovering that which he caused to be Lost; by applying some such Antidote to expel the poison, as Naturalists say the very worst of Serpents yeild. Till a Recantation gives a check, the Calumny goes on, and consequently his Guilt; and instead of Redeeming his time, he loseth more. Thirdly; in the case of Theft, or oppression (which is defrauding and Theeving by dint of *Power*) there is to be consider'd, besides the sinfulness of the Act, the Injury that attends it. Now tho it be very Right, what the *Apostle* says, *Ephes. 4. 28. Let him that stole, steal no more*; yet this is no Redeeming of time without some Compensation; because the man is a wrongful Possessor of anothers Propriety, nor can Possession ever give him a Title to that which is not founded upon Justice. There must be therefore *Restitution* according to ones *Power*; *Restitution* in kind, or Equivalence; otherwise, the sin Remaines, though committed but once, because the Injury continues; and so, both the sin and Injury will continue on, till both be expiated and

and abolish't by satisfaction. 4. Lastly ; if by evil *Instructions*, or worse example one man leads another into Error, or Impiety, the true way for him to Redeem his time after all is, to Cure the mischief by an hearty *retraction* errors many times spread like a Gangrene, insensibly, speedily, and mortally : and such as have been guilty of casting the venome, must not (though they Repent) think their Consciences sufficiently discharged by forbearing for the future : here Double diligence must be used ; first to stop, then to cure the malady, by Reclaiming those they have mis-guided ; and, being now converted themselves, to convert others also *from the Error of their way*, Jam. 5. 20. Briefly, where any hurt hath been done the Reputation, Fortunes, or Souls of men, the onely way one hath to Redeem his time is, as far as'tis possible, to redeem his Guilt, and to recover his *Innocence* by making all the Compensation he can, and by expressing his Zeal to Annihilate his actions, by making Amends for them.

This was the Ground St. *Paul* himself went upon, when he Laboured so Abundantly after his Conversion. It was, to exterpate the false Principles he had propagated before, to satisfy the Church for the wrong he had done it, and by his extraordinary Zeal for Christianity, to prepare people for God in all parts of the world, wherever he could go. His great design was, to recover what he could of the
time

time he had Lost, while he was so strict a Pharisee. And the same thing was the reason of those severities used in the Primitive ages; when Criminals were wont to inflict on themselves great Penances; to macerate their bodies by hard Discipline; to give themselves to austere Fastings; to wallow on the ground; to cover themselves with Sackcloth and Ashes; to make Public acknowledgement of their offences; to throw themselves at their fellow Christians Feet, and upon their Knees to beg the Prayers of Good people at the Church doors; as *Tertullian* tells us in his book of *Repentance*. Those acts of mortification proceeded from a principle of Humility, and a deep sense of sin and of time mis-spent; till superstition crept into the Church, and turned them into meer Pageantry: or the most useful instructions we can gather from them is this; that to Redeem ones time to good purpose, one right Christian way is to make all possible amends and Reparation for evil actions, especially such evil actions as carry along with them *Injury*, and *Scandal*, besides the Guilt which the Conscience contracted from the Sinfulness of their *Nature*.

CHAP. VII.

*A third way is, to do all the good
one can.*

Thirdly, **A** Nother way of Redeeming
ones time is, *to do all the good
one can.*

To do Good, is to be truly Useful
to others in his generation according to
the Abilities God hath given him, and in
that calling and Station wherein the Provi-
dence of God hath disposed of him. We
all came into the World to serve God, and
to help one another; nor have we any
other business here. The Saviour of the
world, that lost not an hour of his life,
went about doing good, *Act. 10. 18.* And thereby
shewed, how unpardonable their Negligence is,
who Trifle away their time, when they have so
many objects of Charity before them, and those
whose Necessities are so great.

Before I proceed upon this subject, we must observe, that a mans own necessities are to be regarded first. For Love to ones self being the *Rule and Standard* of that Charity we owe our Neighbours, it ought to have the Precedency, and to challenge the Principal share of our time and Pains. And here we should consider our own wants duly. I do not mean our necessities as to the things of the World; in which respect mens wants are often as Imaginary, as their appetites are Insatiable: but I speak of *Real* necessities; those of the Soul, which require our Constant and more Particular care, because they are of the greatest Concernment, and the hardest to be supplied.

We must begin with the *Understanding*; for the Notions which lodge there are the spring of action; and according as they are sound or Rotten, so are our lives good or bad, and so is our time well or ill employed. Great care therefore must be taken to have a right Judgment in all points (the first thing which the soul stands in such need of.) And to do it substantial good in this respect, men should sedulously bestow what fair opportunities they have upon Contemplation, Reading, and Profitable studies. For the soul Naturally is neither a Divine, nor *Philosopher*, though indued with Faculties to fit

fit it for the Noblest speculations. It must be under *Pedagogy* and *Pupilage*; nor can the Ripest years *Manumit* it from a state of *Tuition*. Knowledge doth still increase by the good Improvements we make of our hours; and this is the sad reason of some mens Ignorance (especially as to matters they should know most of) because the time they should bestow upon good books, they *Dream* away in sloth, or *Sin* away in vice, or *Fool* away in sports, and many childish *Vanities*, which they abusively call, *Diversion*; a word, which importeth *Business*, when indeed they will have none to be diverted from.

But a weak *mind* is not so bad as a wicked *Temper*. There are many Corruptions in the *Lower* faculties of the Soul, which greatly need an helping hand to cure; depravations of nature which are much the worse, because they make men like unto the very *Beasts* that perish for want of *mortality* as well as of *understanding*. Here the way to do ones soul good indeed is; to cleanse it from its vices; to govern its *Passions*; to mortify its *Lusts*; to rectify its *Appetites*; to wean it from *Sensual Pleasures*; and to destroy that Malice, Envy, Pride, *Revengefulness*, and *Implacability of disposition*, which make a man Resemble, not so much a Brute, as the very Devil.

These

These vices *therefore* are proper and necessary things to imploy ones time upon ; because they are the things which bring the wrath of God upon the children of *disobedience* ; the things which *Pollute the Conscience*, and cost the Soul its peace in this life, and its *Felicity* in another ; nay, the things which are not only the *worst* for their effects, but the most *Difficult* also to be cured, because they are rooted in the Heart ; they are a *Part* of us ; and it *requires* no little *diligence Industry*, and skill to be too *Hard for Nature* ; especially when it comes to be *strengthened* by *Custom*, and when evil *Inclinations* are improved into a pernicious *Habit*.

The truth is, if people would *Husband* their time well, they might find a great deal of work for themselves at *Home*. Yet this must not *supersede* the doing of good *abroad* too. There are *Divers* necessities which God hath made us all *Subject* unto, that in some respect or other, each of us might be serviceable to his neighbours: and as various as these *Necessities* are, so various are the opportunities we have of disposing our time to the best advantage, and after the most becoming manner. Eating and Drinking, and other sensualities, are the life of *Animals*, whose end is destruction. The life of a man, (especially of a *Christian*) is to do good: this sets him
above

above all other Creatures here below, and makes him like unto the blessed God himself, whose goodness the whole earth is full of, and whose compassions fail not. To neglect this, is to throw aside our great business for the sake of mean employments, which will turn to no account, but to awaken our Consciences hereafter, and to grieve us for our Folly, in flinging away that now, which our last Death-bed sorrows will shew to have been of the highest Price.

I Know, nature must be provided for, and that there are several Recreations which are Innocent in themselves, and in their kind, necessary to preserve us in health and vigour, that we may serve God, and spend our serious hours the more acceptably. But how many unlawful delights are there, which should have no part at all of our time allowed them? How many are there, which Border upon vice, so that little time cannot be afforded them without danger? How many that are the occasions of sin, though not vicious in their own Nature? and how many even of the most harmless ones, which are so inordinately pursued, that instead of being a Relaxation, they become a kind of Trade? should an appeal be made to the consciences of Idle and vain persons themselves, they could not but confess, that much leisure might

might be well spared for Pious, and charitable purposes, which there is no sort of necessity for them to waſt other ways, but to take off that time which hangs upon their fingers. And yet to Redeem time, the greateſt remainder of it ſhould be beſtow'd upon doing of Good. *There is one place of Scripture that directs us, to break off our Sins by Righteouſneſs, and our Iniquities by ſhewing mercy to the poor, Dan 4. 27.* meaning, that men ſhould make reparation for what is paſt, by doing eminent acts of Juſtice and Charity for the time to come. There is another place that tells us, *He which converteth a Sinner from the error of his way, ſhall ſave a Soul from death, and ſhall bide a multitude of ſins, Jerm. 5. 20.* And there is a third place that ſaith of Charity in general, that it ſhall cover a multitude of Sins, *1 Pet. 4. 8.* Now, though none of theſe Texts mean, that the doing of Good Juſtifies a man, or Neceſſitates his pardon, by any natural Cauſality, Efficiency, or virtue of the work done (for that would be injurious to the doctrine of Gods free grace, and to our Saviours Merits and ſatisfaction) yet thus much they all imply, that for Chriſt's ſake, God is pleaſed of his own great goodneſs, to impute to us our good and charitable performances, and to accept them as the Condition and means of that pardon, which he freely gives unto all who bring forth fruits meet for Repen-
tance.

This

This shews, That to do all the Good we can, is the ready way to redeem our Time effectually. Which yet is to be understood of *increasing* our Diligence in doing what good we are able; so as to delight in it, and to make it the constant and urgent Business of that part of our Life which is left us. There is no recovering of our lost Time, without doubling at least our Labour and Industry. For Charity is a standing Law of Christ; the great Rule we should have all gone by, as soon as we were past the things of Children. At Twelve Years of Age the Lord Jesus was found sitting in the midst of the Doctors, not so much to hear, as to instruct them. It was his Father's Business, the necessary Work of doing Good he was then about. Which noble Example of Charity, teacheth all Mankind to begin *betimes* to do good Offices; and it upbraids us all with our Neglects, in losing so many fair Opportunities we have had from our Youth. Therefore we should remember our great Omissions, when we go about the Redeeming of our Time, because those we are to make compensation for: And considering this cannot be done by that ordinary Zeal and Industry, which must have been express'd, had we been useful in our Generation from the *beginning*, it must needs be incumbent upon us to labour the more abundantly, to make up those Defects, for which in Conscience we are answerable. For in this case we are to consider, what is our standing Duty still,

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and what we are behind hand in: and to fill up the measure of our Good Works, we should do as much in one Day, as might have taken up two, had we acted regularly all along. For unless our Diligence be doubled, however we may be supposed, after our Repentance, to spend our Time well, we cannot be said to *redeem* it, because a great part of it is yet in *Arrear*.

I observed before, that St. *Paul* compares our Christian Progress to a Race; and that single Comparison will be enough to illustrate this matter. If the Combatants do not start together; or, though they do, if all keep not on with equal Paces, Time and Ground will soon be lost, tho' none of them come as yet to stretching and straining for the Victory. The Sluggard, that loyers away his Minutes; the Trifler, that is willing to be diverted by impertinent Excursions; and the unwary Wretch, that stumbles and falls by not looking to his Steps; These ill Husbands of their Time, who might have finished their Course laudably, by constant, treatable, and moderate striving, having fallen much short of the rest by their own Tardiness, are now under a great Necessity of exerting their utmost Strength and Vigour to *recover* their Minutes what they can; nor have they any other way left them, but to *signalize* themselves by extraordinary Pressings on, and by trying all their Abilities and Breath to the last: Why, thus it is in our Christian Course, in the Race that leadeth to Eternal Life, or Death. Some from the beginning run the way of God's Command-

Commandments with Patience, and Alacrity, and a constant Zeal : And happy are they who remember their Creator from the Days of their Youth ; but these comparatively are but few. Others neglect the business of their Salvation, minding and loving the World only, as if they were to stay in it for ever. Others fly out into Extravagancies and Vanities, as the Devil or the Flesh tempts them out of their way. Others fall into Apostacy from Truth and Religion ; and of all these there is none that doth solid Good, nor is likely to come to Good, till either the Sense of God's Goodness *leads* them, or the Fear of his Wrath and Justice *drives* them to Repentance. Considering therefore what Time they have lost, and how nearly it concerns them to Redeem it, their only Course is, To gird up their Loins with Resolution ; to set about it with Vigour ; to use their utmost Diligence ; to labour the more industriously ; to abound in all manner of Good Works ; and being converted themselves, to apply all possible means to strengthen their Brethren ; as our Saviour told *Peter* in reference to the future Recovering himself from his Apostacy, *Luke 22. 32.*

And here People should consider well, what sorts there are of Good Works, that they may be the better able to Redeem their Time, by doing Good indeed. As, to Inform and Teach the Ignorant, and put them in often remembrance of their Duty in all things ; to admonish such as do amiss ; to be great Examples of Godliness, Righteousness, and Sobriety ; and by all Chris-

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stian Arts to promote the True Power, and the universal Practice of Religion; to restore the Good Name that was unjustly taken away; to make ample Reparation for all Violence and Fraud; and to do this readily and heartily, with the exemplary Zeal of *Zachau*, restoring Four-fold even for False Accusations. To rid ones Hands of Mammon gotten by Unrighteousness, and to make Satisfaction for Wrongs and Injuries; to forgive an Enemy; to vindicate the Innocent; to relieve the Oppressed; to help those who are in Streights and Necessity; to comfort the Afflicted; to visit the Fatherless and Widow in their Distress; to be Eyes to the Blind, and Feet to the Lame; to Feed the Hungry, and Cloath the Naked, and Assist the Sick; to Pray for all; and to reach out a kind Hand to all, according as their Wants, and according as our Abilities and Opportunities are. This is to *Do Good*.

And for the Redeeming of Time well, it is necessary for those who have been slack, or forgetful of these main Offices, to *heighten* their Zeal in the Performance of them, to dispatch them with a very quick Hand, and with a two-fold Expence of Industry and Labour; because otherwise they cannot make up that Time which hath been lost, nor compensate for what they have been wanting in. For these things they ought to have done *before*; they would have been necessary Works, had they been very frugal of their Hours; because to do Good is a Law of Religion and Nature too, which bindeth perpetually.

perpetually. Now, as the Payment of a New Debt is no Discharge of an Old Arrear, so neither is the doing of Good Offices at present a Defeasance of former Obligations. The answering one's Duty at one time, is no Requital for Omissions at another, unless there be a large Supplement of Righteousness and *Charity*. To use our Saviour's Words in another case, *Matth. 23. 23. These things ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.* 'Tis this Addition of Industry and Zeal, which makes Men accepted with God; as was observed before from that Rule, that is to be in the Day of Retribution; the Last shall be as the First, and the First as the Last; that is, Every Man shall receive according to his Works: And that Peoples Acquisitions may be the same, 'tis necessary there should be the same Proportion of Good Works, either as to length of Time, or increase of Industry: Labours in the Vineyard, if they be *late*, are to be *double*, to entitle the Workmen to an Equality of Reward; as was shewed particularly from the Instance of *St. Paul*, who laboured more abundantly than the rest, and thought himself obliged to do so, because he had not been so early a Convert as others.

When therefore you set your self about this most necessary Work of Redeeming your Time, reflect upon your Life past, and consider seriously, what Sins you have been guilty of; what sorts of Righteousness you have been most averse to; what Duties you have been defective in; what fair Opportunities of doing Good you

have wilfully omitted ; and accordingly, apply your whole Mind, Strength and Soul to the Exercise of all those Vertues, the Practice whereof you have hitherto neglected ; and pursue this Course with such Resolution, Constancy and Vigour, as if you were now to retrieve your Original Innocence ; and as if you had no other Business in the World for the future, but to do all manner of Good to the utmost of your Power. *Let him that stole steal no more, saith St. Paul, Ephes. 4. 28.* But that is not all : It follows, *Rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.* You see, where Injustice hath abounded, there Industry and Charity must abound, and that much more ; and so in all other Cases, wherein a Man hath been either wanting, or excessive, he must atone for it by a most lively, operative, and earnest Zeal to do all the Good he can, that he may be full of Good Works, though the Remainder of his Time be short.

C H A P. VIII.

IV. **T**HE next Way of Redeeming your Time, is, *Not to let any one Day slip away wholly, without promoting your Eternal Interest in some degree and measure.* The wiser and stricter sort of Moralists among the Old Heathens, advised People to make choice of a Scheme of Vertue for the Rule of their Lives, and to order all their Actions according to it Day by Day. As thus; To begin their Works with earnest Prayers to God; to honour God before all things; to have a Religious Regard for Oaths; to reverence their Parents; to love their Friends; to delight in good Men; to keep the Body, with all its Faculties and Desires, in subjection; for very Shame to abstain from every thing that is Evil, both abroad and in private; to practice Vertue with Sincerity of Heart; to look upon Riches as a thing that perisheth, and as such to slight them; to study how to resemble God in the Dispositions of the Mind, and to make that ones Aim and Pleasure; to be contented with ones Condition, and at all times to submit to God's Providence, who often gives good Men these outward Matters with a sparing Hand; to be inflexible and constant in a virtuous Course; to weigh ones Actions well beforehand, and to consider the Nature and Consequence

quence of them ; to observe Temperance and Moderation ; to be meek, and patient, and just, and cautious in all cases. Such Rules as these some old Moralists directed People to live by daily. And then, every Night before they went to sleep, they directed them to examine themselves strictly, how they had spent the Day ; that, if they had lived according to Rule, they might have for their present Reward the Pleasures and Joys of a Good Conscience ; but, if they had transgress'd, that they might repent, and thereby learn the better how to amend their Lives the Day following. To this end, before you take your Repose, say they, ask your self, wherein you have transgress'd ? What you have done ? And so, look over all your Actions the Day past two or three times, that no one thing may escape Scruteny and Examination. This was great Advice, especially for Heathens to give : And it brings to my remembrance, what *Suetonius* relates of one of the *Roman* Emperours, that good natur'd Prince, *Titus*, who for the Sweetness of his Temper was call'd, The Love and Delight of Mankind : Considering once, as he was at Supper, that he had not done that Day such Acts of Kindness and Bounty as he was wont to do, said, *Diem perdidit, I have quite lost this Day.* Some *Greeks* that speak of this Story, render his Saying thus, *Σήμερον ἐκ ἐβασίλευσα ; or, This Day I have not reigned ; I have not been a Prince :* As if all his Greatness consisted in doing Good daily, and as if he had thrown away his Authority and Power, in suffering a Day to pass without some considerable Testimonies and Marks of his

his Goodness: He remembered *Pythagoras* his Rule of Self-examination at Night, and of Repenting for Failings: And however the Story be told, it comes all to one in effect: And no less a Man than *St. Jerome* takes particular Notice of it, in his Comments on the Sixth Chapter of the Epistle to the *Galatians*, and makes use of it to the Reproof and Shame of negligent Christians. If (saith he) *the Emperour Titus (a Man that was a Stranger to the Law, to the Gospel, to the Doctrine of our Saviour and the Apostles, if he) was so concerned for the loss of one Day, how should not we be concern'd for the loss of so many Days and Years too?* And the Truth is, since *Jesus Christ* doth expect, that our Righteousness should exceed the Righteousness even of the strictest Professors among the Jews, (the Scribes and Pharisees) we cannot expect less than the greatest Condemnation, if at last it cometh short of the Righteousness of Philosophers and Heathens. As we are under the Laws and Discipline of a Master, who is infinitely greater than a *Pythagoras*, or than *Moses* himself; so is our Vigilance and Diligence to be much greater than their Scholars was. The Covenant given us carries with it a Prospect of far better things, than were manifestly and explicitly promised of old to the *Jews* themselves: And upon that account there is a Necessity for us to be the better Husbands of our Time, that we may obtain them.

The Great Promise God hath given us, is, of Eternal Happiness with himself; and to quick-
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en our Endeavours after it, these two things require our serious and *daily* Consideration.

1. First, What is necessary on our part in Order to Eternal Happiness.

2. Secondly, How Assiduous and Constant our Care had need be, to do that daily which is indispensably required of us; something of it at least.

1. First then, the thing necessary on our Part, in order to Eternal Happiness, is, a God-like *Temper*, and Disposition of *Mind*. Though our Saviour hath purchased for us a *Liberty* to enter into that Holy and Blissful place above; yet to *Prepare* us for it, such a Frame of Heart is requisite, as will make it to us a place of Happiness *indeed*. Now that must needs be a Divine Frame; or a Temper suitable to the Nature of God. For we must not think that the meer Possession of Heaven makes the Spirits of Men Happy; nor that a quiet Grief-less Condition is that wherein all Felicity doth consist. Happiness, that is compleat and perfect, must answer all the Faculties of the Soul; especially its Affections; and God must be the Glorious Object for us to *Enjoy*; that is, to Admire, and Love, and delight in, to all Eternity. There must be therefore an Assimilation of Temper, and a likeness of Mind; because Dissimilitude naturally carries with it Displacency, and Averseness, which is no more reconcilable with Happiness, than Love is with Hatred. To live happily

happily with God and Christ, we must be of the same Dispositions ; And it was for this great Reason, that when Christ lived with us upon Earth, he gave us so many Spiritual and Divine Laws. They were not purely Arbitrary Commands, proceeding from God's absolute and uncontrollable Pleasure, meerly to try and exercise our Obedience ; but they were intended as Wise and Gracious Methods, to Polish our Minds, to Perfect our Nature, and to raise it by degrees to such an high and noble Pitch, that it might come near to the most Perfect and Blessed Nature of his Father, for the Fruition of whom he came to fit us.

To answer therefore his great Ends, 'tis necessary for us to form in our Hearts a Divine Goodness of Temper, by the help of those Precepts which he hath laid before us, with a design somewhat like to *Jacob's*, *Gen. 30.* when he laid before the Cattel pilled Rods, to make them conceive Lambs of a suitable Colour. Those Divine Rules which are proposed to us to observe, are to make us Partakers of the Divine Nature ; to renew in us the Divine Image ; to shape in our Souls a Resemblance of God ; and all this, that we may be meet for the Inheritance of the Saints in Light ; because without such a Similitude, it is impossible for us, either to please God, or to be pleased with him.

2. These things being thoroughly considered, it will manifestly appear, in the second place, that we are strictly concern'd to make diligent
and

and daily use of our Time, to do what is necessary towards our everlasting Happiness. For it is a thing of no sudden dispatch ; but that which requires all the time a Man can find in his whole Life, to do it well. Those Moral Vertues which serve to perfect us, and to make us like unto God, are not poured out all in an instant, as those miraculous Gifts were of Old ; much less can they become presently habitual. There is required a constant Course of repeated Actions to acquire and fix them ; and this requires Assiduity of Practice : Day by Day, some part or other of this necessary Work must be dispatch'd : Otherwise the Difficulties of it will increase ; in *This* respect like secular business, which when it comes in upon us in abundance, grows under our hands by being neglected, though but for a Day.

In the prosecution of this Matter, let us consider what labour the very *Beginnings* call for. The first Task we are to go about is, to rectifie our Corrupt Nature ; which is a thing that obligeth us to continual attendance and care over it, because it is like a sort of Soyl, which is still apt of it self to run to Weeds, even without our watering. We brought with us from the Womb the Seminal Principles of Evil. And as these appear betimes, so they rise quickly to a great head, and heighth, like Nettles and such other Trash, which taint the Ground still the more, by casting new Seeds for their Propagation. Here then the Work should be early, for the saving of time ; to cultivate our Nature from
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our Youth, with a quick hand to check those Vices, which are like Poysonous Weeds in us; and to make all the Trumpery to Dye daily, as the Man grows. Pride, Anger, Spightfulness, Envy, Lust, Sensuality, Inordinate Self-Love, Roughness, and Intractability of Spirit, and whatever comes under the notion of *ill Nature*; these are very Noxious things, that spring out of us, and that stain and vitiate the whole Man more and more daily; and therefore require constant Diligence to extirpate them what we can, while the Mind is yet soft, tender and pliant: Because when once the Devil irrigates, and custom confirms them, they will be the harder and harder to be Eradicated. Many a Soul is spoil'd and ruin'd for want of good Education in time. The Practice of Sin brings Delight with it; Pleasure makes it Customary; Custom renders it habitual; and when that which was a Fault, comes to be Wickedness; (studied, acted, repeated Vice, and deeply Rooted;) the labour in clearing the Soul of it, will be as different in proportion, as it is between drawing a little Shrub, and grubbing up a sturdy Tree.

This confirms the Matter we are now upon, *viz.* that in new moulding our Hearts to fit our selves for Eternal Felicity, we should redeem our time by doing something *every day* that is considerable. For the time we *LOSE*, or *NEGLECT*, Vice *GAINS*; and thereby becomes the more difficult to be subdued and mortified. *Can the Ethiopian change his Skin, or the Leopard his Spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed*

to do Evil, Jer. 13. 23. To break an habit, especially on a sudden, is like the invading and forcing of Nature, which is not to be done without a *Violent* hand. Whether it be in a Good, or in an Evil course of Life, the Powers of the Soul gather strength by exercise and use; but much more in an evil Course; because our outward Senses being thereby wont to be gratified, fall into a confederacy with our inward Propensions; and between both, Reason finds it a very hard matter to keep it self from being Captivated. Upon which account it must needs require Time, to recover that Dominion which is its Right and Prerogative. And though Grace comes in to its assistance, yet considering that the Spirit of God worketh in a moral way, by exciting, moving, and perswading, but not constraining, the Conquest cannot be present and instantaneous. For as long as Nature is at the bottom, it will appear, and that with Vigour, when it hath the aid and help of Sense, and when custom hath given it a kind of Title to the Mastery. This shews what great Necessity there is for a Man, to bestow pains upon himself *Daily*; because it is this which will give him a gradual Victory: He is continually doing something *Towards* it: Here he gaineth one Point, and there another, and so in time he finds certain and kindly success, by thus taming his Nature, and bringing it to a ductile manageable Temper by degrees.

All this while I suppose him not to have arrived to the pitch of an over-grown Sinner, but to be come to the ordinary Age of Manhood;
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when ones Lusts, though they are strong and impetuous, yet are not so Fixt, Obstinate, and Refractory, as crooked Old Age is apt to make them. Such an *Experienced Wretch*, whom the Pleasure, and perhaps the Profit likewise of so many Years hath confirm'd in Wickedness, comes at last to be so hardned, that all Reasonings, Admonitions, Counsels, and Prayers are thrown away upon him, and make as little effectual impression upon his perverse Mind, as they would upon a Rock, or Adamant. The danger of coming to this sad pass, is a *stronger* Argument still of the Necessity there is to redeem ones time, by doing something *Daily* in order to Eternity; that is, to mortifie some Lust or other every day, and every day to live more and more unto God. *For when Lust hath conceived it bringeth forth Sin, Jam. 1. 15.* and Sin is finish'd by degrees, by growing, and gathering strength daily. And by this means the Devil insensibly prepares a way to that sad State, which Divines call *Final Impenitence*; meaning such a Numbness, Stupidity, and Deadness of Heart, as doth utterly indispose it for a true Godly Repentance. 'Tis to be fear'd, that Men often come to this wretched State by the just Judgment of God upon them; for their irreligious lives, and for their obstinately putting off the Reformation of them from *Day to Day*: The truth is, it naturally followeth such a wicked Course: For *Use* and *Custom* do naturally serve to harden the Heart, as was observed before: So that when the Hoary Head comes, it is as hard a matter to renew that old wicked Mind in it, as it is to
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renew ones Age. Nature is of it self inclined to Evil; and when a long trade of Wickedness hath brought the Mind to be in love with it, to be devoted to it, to be bent, set, and fixt upon it, it must needs be morally impossible to pluck up those Men's Habits quite by the Roots, which have been so many Years a contracting, and which have grown so strong and deep into the very *Heart*. So that though we should suppose an old Villain to have the same means and measures of Grace which are afforded the *Vain Youth*, that perhaps is guilty of the same Sins too; yet the case of the former would be far more desperate than the condition of the latter, were there nothing else to be considered but this, because the one hath been much more *Used* and *Accustomed* to Wickedness than the other.

But besides this, it must be said, that the Hopes concerning both are not the same. For the more time Men waste in an Evil Course, the less they have of God's Spirit; and by this means also the stiffer and harder are their Hearts, and the more they Sin away their day of Grace. Without Christ we can do nothing, *Jo. 15. 5.* For it is God which worketh in us, both to will, and to do, of his good Pleasure, *Phil. 2. 13.* The Strength we have, is from above; the Power which serves to prepare and assist our Souls, and which doth every way enable us to work out our Salvation, it is freely given by the Father of Spirits. Now though God giveth freely unto all, and to every Man such a portion of his Grace as is necessary and suitable; yet they
they

they that are negligent, and ill Husbands of their Talents, do impair their Stock daily : By resisting the Holy Ghost, they take a Course to grieve him ; and by continuing to grieve, they proceed at length to quench him. Where God's Grace is abus'd or slighted, there he withdraws it, in Vengeance for that Wilfulness and Hardness which was antecedent : And then is God said, to give People up unto their own Hearts Lusts ; to let them walk in their own Counsels, *Psal.* 81. 12. to send them strong Delusions, so that they believe a Lie, *2 Thess.* 2. 11. to give them up to vile Affections, and to give them over to a reprobate Mind, *Rom.* 1. 26, 28. The Meaning of these Expressions is, That God doth sometimes take away from Men the Grace they had ; that he quite leaves them to themselves, and delivers them up to the saddest state of Mind ; thereby punishing them most justly for the long Incurribleness of their Temper. By this means 'tis possible for them to play and sin away all the accepted Time before they are aware, and to bring themselves under an irreversible Sentence of Damnation in this their Life-time. It is possible, I say ; and 'tis to be fear'd many actually do so, by persisting and going on in a Trade of Wickedness from Year to Year. I answer, 'tis a just Provocation for God to deal by them, as he did by Pharaoh, whom he gave utterly over to an obdurate state for his Stubbornness and Obstinacy, especially after the Sixth Plague. And though he did not presently cut him off, but suffer'd him to

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live still some time longer ; yet this was not in expectation of Repentance from him, being now brought by his own Wilfulness to a deserted Condition ; but it was to this end, that he might be made at last a signal and astonishing Example of Divine Vengeance. From which Instance it is clear, that a Man may sin away his Time, and the Grace of God, till he comes to an Incapacity of repenting in good earnest ; and that he may do this before he dies.

And this is one Reason, why the best Divines are so severe against that which they call a *Late Repentance* ; meaning, Remorse of Conscience, and Sorrow for Sin, which is not *begun* till old Age, or Sickness comes, and the Terrors of Death with it. For though it be granted, that God pardons every True Penitent, whenever he turns to God with all his Heart and Soul : Yet the great Question is, Whether a late Repentance be True, Right, and such as the Gospel requires ? that is, Whether it be indeed a True Change, and Renovation of the Mind ? For there may be a Sorrow, and often is, a real and passionate Sorrow, without such a Change ; a Sorrow that proceeds, not from an Hatred of Sin, but meerly from a Fear of Hell.

This is clear from the Practice of many Ungodly and Unrighteous Hypocrites, who in time of sudden and dangerous Sickness sighed and groan'd, have been restless and in an Agony

ny, sent in all haste for a Confessor, call'd for Prayers, and express'd such Grievs, Vows, Promises, and Resolutions of Amendment, as if they were as right Penitents, as that dying Thief was upon his Cross; and yet upon the Recovery of their Health, have dropt the Memory of all these Saint-like Professions, left all their Vows behind them in their Chambers, taken up again their former Courses, returned like Dogs to the Vomit they had cast up, to the same Riot, Rapine, Injustice and Malice which they acted before. This is a Sign, that all that while the Love of Sin lay lurking and close in their Breasts, unrenounc'd, unmolested; and that all the Bitterness of their Souls came only from the Fear of Damnation; a Passion, somewhat like that of Criminals, when they are going to be Hang'd, and yet, if they had Liberty, would be as dishonest as ever under the very Gibbet. Now for Wicked Men to be in a Fright, when they think themselves a Dying, is no wonder at all, especially if their Consciences be awake. And if Fear and Sorrow be all, it is as good as nothing, though it be hearty and passionate: For the Devil is a Devil still, tho' he believes and trembles; and perhaps those Agitations of Mind are no better than *his*, where-with wicked *Men* are ruffled on their Sick Beds, especially after a long Life, a continual Course, a constant Trade of Impiety and Unrighteousness. For how is it probable, that so many old beloved Vices can be quite cast off on a sudden? That so many fixt Habits can be eradicated in

the twinkling of an Eye? Or that the whole Bent and Temper of the Heart can in a Moment be changed so, as to be Diametrically opposite to what it was just before the Physician was sent for? No; it is far more probable, that it was only the sight of Hell that scared the Wretch, and threw him into Pangs; and so any Man may be troubled, terrified and tormented, though God hath forsaken him; because Self-preservation is an inseparable Principle of *Nature*.

The Result and Summ of this whole Argument is this; That to redeem ones Time to verry good purpose, it is an excellent way to be bettering ones Spiritual State *every Day* in some respect and proportion. For the Work a Man hath to do is great and difficult, and that which requires every Day's Care and Diligence of him; especially if Evil Customs have got the Start, and are before-hand with him. *Nature alone* is hard to be rectified; and a constant Tenor of Diligence is necessary to transform it so, as to make it represent the Divine Nature. But when Evil *Habits* are to be contended and grappled with *too*, every Day's Resolution and Activity is little enough to conquer them as they should be conquer'd, that Faith and Vertue may carry the Day, and triumph over them. Either they must be daily resisted, or most certainly they will get Ground of us daily: And what Peoples Negligence will turn to at last, in Old Age, or upon a Death-Bed, God alone knoweth

eth infallibly. 'Tis not likely a Man should be able to destroy that at his last Hour, or in the time of Weakness, which he suffer'd to gather and grow to a great Head in the Days of Health and Vigour. More likely it is, that God will punish such Negligence with utter Dereliction and Hardness of Heart; against which no sufficient or sure Provision can be made, but by hearkning to his Voice, while it is called *to Day*.

Remember therefore the Advice even of those old Philosophers I spake of, who would have you resolve and fix upon a good Rule of Vertue, (and none can pretend to be so good, as what Jesus Christ hath given us all) and every Day examine your Consciences what you have omitted, and what you have done; what Prayers you have offer'd up unto the Father of Lights; what Offices of Righteousness, Mercy and Goodness you have performed to Men; what Good you have done to your own Souls; what inordinate and irregular Desires you have cherish'd; what Lusts of the Flesh you have mortified; what Passions you have commanded and subdued; how low you have brought every lofty Imagination; how far you have put away all Bitterness, and Wrath, and Anger, and Clamour, and Evil-speaking, with all Malice; wherein ye have imitated the Life of our Lord Jesus, who sacrificed His for you; and to what Degrees you have perfected your Nature unto a Similitude of the adorable Perfections of the

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ever-blessed God, whose great and tender Mercies are over all his Works. As true Honour doth consist, not in an empty Title, but in Generosity and Nobleness of Mind ; so doth true Religion consist, not in formal Shows and Professions, but in those Divine Endowments of Soul, which make us approach near to the Glories of our Maker. And by taking your self thus to Account every Night, you will the better discern what you are to implore God's Pardon and Assistance for against the Day following ; wherein you have been wanting ; what Defects you are to make up ; what is to be the principal Business of the next Day ; what Graces you are to improve ; what you are to practise, and what you are to avoid. In short ; you will easily know how, and be easily able in deed to redeem your lost Time ; because it will be *little*, if due Care and Diligence be used *every Day*. By this Method you may soon take an honest Account of your Actions ; your Repentance will be renewed day by day, the Care you ought to have of your Immortal Soul will continually abide with you, and rest upon your Mind ; your Heart and Ways will be always under your *own* watchful Eye as well as God's ; the Assistances and Comforts of God's Spirit you will never be without ; there will be no room for those vicious Habits, which bring others at last to a moral Impossibility of repenting ; 'twill be impossible for them ever to be fixt, or to take Root ; hardly will an Hour in any one Day be quite lost ; I am sure, a long Tract of
Time

Time will be saved, which is utterly dropt and forgotten by those, who leave all to the sad After-reckonings of a Death-bed. The great Mischief then is, that 'tis out of their Power to recover their Losses, though their Hearts should earnestly desire it ; so many Months and Years are impossible to be recalled ; and all this Calamity comes from the want of some Diligence *every Day* ; 'tis Men's great Negligence as to this Particular, that postpones the whole Business of their Salvation, and hinders that assiduous Progress and Proficiency, whereby otherwise they might have grown in Grace unto a perfect Man, unto the Measure of the Stature of the Fulness of Christ.

C H A P. IX.

V. and **A** Nother Effectual Way of Redeem-
 Lastly. **A** ing our Time, is, *To spend as
 much, as may be, of the remainder of it upon
 Devotion, especially upon the Solemnities of Pub-
 lick Devotion in the House of God. A Day in
 thy Courts is better than a thousand, saith the
 devout Psalmist, Psal. 84. 10. It is better spent,
 and will turn to better Account, than all the
 Years that Vice and Vanities consume. To
 withdraw our selves from the World; to take
 away, as it were by Reprisal, that Time which
 the World usually steals from us; to Dedicate,
 Offer up, Appropriate that Time to God, and
 to bestow it upon God: This is such a plain
 way to recover our lost Hours, as is obvious to
 all who have a true Sense of Religion. But be-
 cause there are many Duties which we own in
 the Theory to be Good, and yet are wanting
 to in point of Practice, to encourage our En-
 deavours as to this Particular, Two Things re-
 quire our serious Consideration.*

I. First, That to attend diligently upon the
 Ordinances and Institutions of our Religion, is
 an excellent way for us to do the Great Work
 for which the redeeming of our best Time is
prescrib'd and intended.

II. Se-

II. Secondly, That it is a ready way to keep us from losing our time for the *Future*.

I. First, To attend diligently upon the Ordinances and Institutions of our Religion, is an excellent way for us to do that great Work, for which the Redeeming of our *Lost* time is prescribed and *Intended*.

By the Ordinances of our Religion I mean, the Listening to and Meditating upon the Word of God; the use of the holy Sacrament; and the lifting up of our Hearts in Prayers and Thanksgivings, and the like. And by the great Work we are to do I understand, the preparing and fitting our Souls for a Blessed Eternity. Now for the effectual doing of this, nothing serveth as a more proper and direct means, than diligent attendance upon those Religious Offices.

For it is by the constant use of these Ordinances, that the Spirit of God is Ministred unto us, and worketh in us; that our Lusts are gradually mortified; that our Hearts are transform'd and changed as God would have them; that the Virtues which are necessary to qualify us for an heavenly State, are confirm'd and increased in us; and that we grow in Grace, and in the saving knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. To illustrate this Matter particularly.

Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God, Rom. 10. 17. Whether this Word
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be Preach'd, or Read, it is an instrument of Grace to all whose Hearts are open to receive and obey it. Therein the most precious *Promises* are exhibited, and the most terrible *Threats* denounced against all Ungodliness and Unrighteousness of Men; especially against such as hold the Truth in unrighteousness. Therein all those *Doctrines* are contained, which are according unto godliness; the whole Counsel of God is declared; and all those Things revealed, which are profitable for instruction in Righteousness, that every Man may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good Works. Therein are given those divine *Laws*, which are apt to renew our Minds, and to cleanse us from all filthiness of Flesh and Spirit, that we may perfect Holiness in the fear of God: Therein also we see a great cloud of *Witnesses*, who by their Exemplary Lives have taught us to lay aside every weight, and the Sin that doth so easily beset us, and to run with patience the Race that is set before us. Above all, therein we behold the *Example* of the Lord Jesus, whose most holy Life was intended for a Pattern unto us, that we should follow his steps; and whose ignominious and most painful Death was intended partly to *Frighten* us from Sin, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purifie to himself a peculiar People, zealous of good Works. All these things we find in the Scriptures; and by these means the Scriptures, if duly considered and meditated upon, are of vast use to us, and serve to produce in us Faith, Hope, Charity, and all manner of Righteousness

Redeeming of Time.

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ness and true Holiness. Upon which account it must needs be a very necessary and profitable way of Redeeming our Time, to bestow as much of it as we can upon Learning, Hearing, Reading, and inwardly digesting the good word of God, which is thus able in all respects to save our Souls.

In like manner, the frequent *Participation* of Christ's *Body and Blood* is a vast help towards those Spiritual improvements, which should take up the greatest part of our time. For as that heavenly Ordinance puts us in mind of God's adorable Perfections; especially his Wisdom, Righteousness and Mercy, which shined so bright in the complicated Mystery of our Redemption; so it serves to raise our Hearts into the highest Admirations of God; and stirs us up to stand in awe of his Justice; to rely upon his Compassions; to express all possible Gratitude for Mercies so undeserved, so stupendous; to submit with all Humility to his Commands and Providence; to shew the Sense we have of his great Goodness by suitable returns of Affection; and to love one another, because God hath so loved us all. In short, by preparing our selves duly for this Blessed Sacrament, and by a Reverent and Religious use of it, our Faith becomes the stronger, our Hopes the more vigorous; our Charity the more Ardent; our Minds the more Circumspect; our Care and Caution the more strict; and all the ordinary Gifts and Graces of God's Spirit are thereby the more Exercised, Confirmed, and increased in us.

This

This shews what an admirable way of Redeeming our lost time this is, to attend diligently upon the Institutions of our Religion, because the great work we are to do, in order to a blessed Eternity, and to fit us for it, is thereby carried on with constant Dispatch, and with the quicker Hand. But we should consider moreover how profitably we may employ our time, and recover in some measure what is lost, by daily setting aside some part and portion of the time we have for the *Ordinance of Prayer alone*; even when we are not Communicants at the Altar, nor hearers of the Word after the most solemn manner. *Every day will I bless thee*, saith the Psalmist, *Psf. 145. 2.* And indeed the thing is grounded upon an eternal Law of Reason: For we stand in *Need* of his Goodness, and *Receive* of his Goodness daily; and therefore it is necessary and equal, that we should address our selves to him daily, with Supplications and Thanksgivings. Now if we would do this (I mean, do it with such devout Hearts as ought to be applied to so sublime a Duty) besides the advantage we get by attending Weekly and Monthly upon other Ordinances, our daily attendance upon *This*, would be of infinite use to us. For hereby we do not only fit and prepare our Souls for an heavenly State, but are indeed a *Doing* the works of Heaven; actually fix'd upon them, already employed and *Engaged* in those Exercises, which are the Life of Angels, and of the Spirits of Just Men made Perfect. To admire, and adore,

dore, and love; and praise God, is the everlasting business of the Blessed above: And this we do here below, though not in that intense Degree, when we worship him in Truth, and in the Beauty of Holiness; when we prostrate ourselves before him, under a profound and awful Sense of his super-excellent Majesty; when our Minds are fix'd upon him, as the Glorious and Ravishing Object of our Contemplations; when the Faculties of our Souls are acting vigorously upon him; when we Exalt and Magnifie him in our Hearts; when our Desires stream out after him, as the only Good we long for; when our Thoughts are full of rapturous Idea's of his Perfections; when we celebrate and set him forth, as the greatest, wisest, and best of all Beings; when our Hearts are inflamed with the Love of him; and when we offer up our Prayers and Praises to him with Affections as high as Heaven, and as large as the Universe.

And can any time be better, or so well spent, as that which is thus employed? This is to Redeem ones Time to the best purpose; and in some Sense to live it over again, by following the great Work of ones whole life close, and so by living much in a little: And the design of this Consideration is, to stir you up to the Love and Practice of Devotion; as a proper way of making your Life up, wherein soever you may have been hitherto defective. To recover what hath been mis-spent, and to fit your self for God and Heaven, without frequent Acts of Piety, is impossible:

possible: Rather it is a way to lose on, and spend amiss still, and to make your Condition every day worse and worse. And this is one great Reason, that there are so many Evil People in the World, because they neglect a Course of Devotion, which, if diligently and rightly followed, could not chuse but make them better.

I do not mean, that every one is a Saint that resorts to the Church, or that the repeating of so many good Prayers is enough to dispose and qualifie People for Eternal Happiness. No, there are some that content themselves with the bare performance of the outward Work; and there are others that go to the Temple rather in compliance with a Custom, or out of Compliment and Civility to the Laws, than for Conscience sake towards God. But this is my meaning, that when Men apply their Souls to the use of God's Ordinances, as a necessary Duty, and seriously *intend* to do themselves good by the use of them, and go about it with Sincerity of *Mind*, and Exercise themselves in it with attentive *Zeal*, and with Humble, Fervent and Devout Spirits; when their Hearts are thus *Honestly* dispos'd, they take such a ready Course to fit themselves for Heaven, as God will be sure to Bless and Prosper with success, if they persevere unto the end in so doing. They are then in God's way, and in the way of the Holy Spirit, to enlighten their Understandings, to guide them into the Truth, to renew their Minds, to sanctifie

sanctifie their Affections, to direct their Wills, to improve and perfect their Natures, and to assist and strengthen them unto every good work. And by this means, as they obtain pardon for their past Miscarriages, so they gradually retrieve their former Losses, and make the time past their own again, by their extraordinary Husbandry of the remainder, and by filling up an *Hiatus* with a proportionable Supplement.

2. Secondly, As the diligent attendance upon God's Ordinances helps us to redeem the time that is *Gone*; so it serves to keep us from *Losing* more for the *Future*. We may reckon that time to be *Lost*, which is spent either after a *Wicked*, or after a *Vain* manner: That is, when the Conscience contracteth some great Guilt in the spending of it, or when the Man gets no solid Benefit or Satisfaction by it, though strictly speaking we cannot affirm, it is sinned away; and in both these respects we shall see, that a course of Devotion secures us from being any considerable Losers.

1. First, That time is to be accounted *Lost*, which is spent in *Wickedness*. When Vice takes it up, so much of our Life is gone to our eternal Prejudice and Hurt, unless the Wickedness be retracted by timely Repentance: And when it is retracted, a Man doth what he can to undo his Actions, and to unlive his former Life; and so begins, as it were, his days again. To be sure he himself reckons so much of his time quite

quite thrown away ; is willing to rase it out of his own Memory ; and heartily wisheth, that the just Judge of all the Earth would forget it too, and never impute or account it unto him. Now People that are ever mindful of their Devotions, are not in danger of losing their time *This way* ; because they are assured, that if they *regard Iniquity in their Hearts, the Lord will not bear them.* Psal. 66. 18. Nay, that their *Sacrifice will be an Abomination,* Prov. 15. 8. Upon which account 'tis morally impossible for them to Sin and Pray too, lest instead of Mercies they should draw down a Thunderbolt, and instead of *Bread* should receive a *Stone*, or a *Scorpion*. They who have a sense of God, must needs be shie of offering up such Prayers, as are enough to put them out of Countenance, and out of Hope too ; such Prayers as they know will Recoil upon them ; and not only fly in their faces, but terrifie and gall their very Consciences also. But in truth, we cannot suppose Men of Pious Minds to spend their precious Time to such bad purposes as these ; because the Notions they have of God's Majesty, of his Omnipresence and Omniscience, of his Justice, Holiness, and the like, are a continual check upon them, to govern their natural Inclinations, and to restrain them from those evil Courses, into which others run without Fear or Wit, *as the Horse rusheth into the Battel*, as the Prophet speaks, *Jer.* 8. 6. Besides, as they have not the *Heart*, or *Face* to Sin, so neither have they those *Temptations* and *Opportunities*, which the Devil Ministreth daily to those

those who are such *Strangers* to the Throne of Grace, as if they lived *Without* God in the World. Such Men are never out of the Devil's road; and therefore it is no wonder if Vice be the trade they bestow their Time upon; no wonder, if a Luxurious Table, or a *Dalilah's* Lap, or a Drunken Society, or Prophane Discourse, or the study of Mischief, or the Drudgery of Covetousness, or the Pride of Life taketh up those Hours which God hath a right to. Ungodly Principles and Contempt of things Sacred, do always betray Men to some wickedness or other; nor cannot be but Irreligion and Vice must go together; so that 'mongst other Arguments that might be heaped up to encourage us to a life of Devotion, this is one, that it is an excellent *Security* and *Preservative* against Sin, and keeps us out of Harms-ways. *Blessed is the Man*; saith *David*, *that walketh not in the Counsel of the Ungodly, nor standeth in the way of Sinners, nor sitteth in the Seat of the Scornful*, Ps. 1. 1. This is the Felicity of the devout Man in particular; whose Affections being set upon the things above, he has not so much time to spare from Prayer and Contemplation, as the Children of this World fling away upon their Lusts; nor doth Temptation or ill Company seduce him into the ways of Death. The Angels of God are his guard to keep him in all his ways. Solitude, which is to some a *Snare*, is to him an opportunity for Grave and Holy *Meditations*. This House of God is a Sanctuary to him from his own *Evil*
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Self; a place of refuge from his corrupt Heart; the very *Thoughts* whereof he there keeps in order, by minding the several Duties of the Place, and by the reverend Apprehensions he hath of that infinite Being, who is the *Searcher* of Hearts, and by this means he clears and rids his Soul of those vagrant Imaginations, which otherwise would disturb and annoy his Heart, as *Abraham* drove away the *Fowls*, when he offer'd to God *His Sacrifice*, *Gen. 15. 11.*

Thus, to attend diligently upon the Ordinances and Institutions of our Religion, keeps us from losing more of our Time in the *First* respect; from squandering it away upon that which is *Evil*; nay, from laying any part of it out upon the *Principles*, the *Occasions*, the *Opportunities* of *Evil*. And the use we should make of it is, that of that little Time God allot us in this World, we should set what we can apart for religious Offices. The Scripture calls it, *Praying without Ceasing*, 1 *Thessl. 5. 17. Continuing in Prayer, and watching in the same with Thanksgiving*, *Col. 4. 2. Praying always with all Prayer and Supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all Perseverance*, *Ephes. 6. 18. And continuing instant in Prayer*, *Rom. 12. 12.* By which Expressions is meant, not that we should be praying every *Minute* of the Day (for other Works of Necessity and Charity are to be attended on also) but that we should not let slip any convenient *Opportunity* of Devotion, nor play away those hours which are

Proper

Proper for it ; but with all possible diligence and application of Mind observe those times of Prayer which are *Stated* and *Fixt*, either by publick Authority, or by our own private, voluntary choice ; so that our whole time may turn to very good account.

2. Secondly, By this means we shall be sure not to spend our Time *Vainly* neither ; which is *another* way of losing it ; that is, when a Man gets no solid *Benefit* and *Satisfaction* by it, though strictly speaking we cannot affirm, that he *Sin- neth* it away, or lays it out upon Vice and Wickedness. Man being a rational Creature, endued with Understanding, on purpose that he might deliberately Act in order to Ends that befit and become the Dignity of his Nature ; all that time is to be reckon'd *Lost* to him, which doth not serve in some measure to *Answer* such Ends. To gratifie the Senses is the life of a Beast ; and it becomes a Beast well enough ; because a Beast hath no higher, or nobler Faculties than Sense. But in *Man*, Reason hath the Superiority ; or a faculty of distinguishing between that which is morally Good, or morally Evil ; and a power of discoursing and judging touching the *Nature* of his Actions ; what they *Deserve*, and what may be the *Rewards* of them. To Act like a *Man* therefore, is to live according to *Reason* ; or, as it becomes a Creature that hath the rules of Vertue and Religion before him ; and as long as he Acteth according to those Rules, *besides* the Rewards he Entitles

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himself to in *another* World hereafter, he doth himself great good in this Life, and receives that *Pleasure* and *Satisfaction* of mind which is an unspeakable Reward at present. Now of all the Acts of a Rational Soul, *Devotion*, or the Contemplating and Worshipping of God, brings with it the *Highest* Pleasure; and therefore the Time that is bestow'd upon it, must needs be of the very best account.

The truth of this is, such as Worship God with all their Hearts, find by daily Experience the great Pleasures that go along with their *Acts* of Worship; the relish and satisfaction they leave *behind* upon the Soul, when the Solemnity is *over*; the Delights which *still* accompany the Mind; and the wonderful Comfort and Complacency wherewith the Day is *Concluded*; these *Present* Rewards shew, that they have well employed and husbanded their Time. And when a Man comes at last to cast up his Actions upon his Death-Bed, and to take a true Inventory of them, most certainly nothing then can speak greater Peace, or minister greater Joy to his departing Soul, than if he be able to give this Testimony of himself, that amidst all the Contingencies, Vanities, Allurements, and Fatigues of the World, he hath made his *Life* an *Offering* to his Maker.

This we should consider in *Time*, and while it is yet called, *To Day*. It becomes Creatures endued with Reason, and enlightned with Revelation

lation also, to *Forecast* Events throughly, and to provide such things *Before-hand*, as will stand us in good stead, and be of substantial use and comfort to us all along; of which, this must needs be one of the greatest and most considerable; *viz.* A continued *Course* of Piety and Religion.

And what have they to compare with this, who, though they be not *Vicious*, yet are very *Vain* Persons, *Whiffing* away their hours in Pageantry and Impertinencies; not as if they were reasonable Beings, able and obliged to prosecute the noblest Ends; but rather little Puppets and Figures of Men, brought into the World, just to take a few insignificant turns in it, and to make a shew? Such are those, who know not, or think not how to rid away their time, but by formal Entertainments, by Mirth and Rallery, by Ceremony and Courtship, by idle Visits, by Finicalness in Dressing, by Sports and Gaming; in short, by an unaccountable variety of un-man-like ways of spending and passing away ones Life. I suppose such People not formally to *Sin*, but foolishly to *Trifle* away their Minutes, which is the softest and most innocent Construction that can be made of it. Now though by these mean and childish Methods no such Guilt is contracted, as is by down-right Villany and Debaucheries; yet this is enough to render them contemptible, that they bring a Man no solid advantage or satisfaction, and therefore are to be reckoned so many lost Expences. The pleasure

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of them is like an Infant's *Dream*, which is only the present Operation of Fancy, that gives him a Minutes Smile. The *Soul* is never awhit the *wiser*, or *better* for them; but the *worse* rather, by being degraded from its Dignity, and contumeliously put with all its noble Faculties, to uses that are silly and reproachful. All that can be said of it is, that by the help of these mean and trifling ways, so much time is gone: The Fool's Fingers are eas'd of it; which will be so far from being a comfort to him, that when Sickness and Death shall come, it will be excessive Bitterness to consider, how well so many Hours might have been employed, by working out his Salvation in the Church, and in the Closet.

To conclude all: The design of this *whole* Discourse is, to shew, how much it is our Duty, our Interest, and our Wisdom, to make a good use of our Time; and what Course is proper for us to take, that it may turn to very good account; to our *Present*, and *Future* advantage.

And would God we would be perswaded to consider seriously, what an *Important* thing this is! the main business indeed we should be mindful of in this Life; because it is the *Measure* of our Lives; and when Death comes, 'twill be equally as impossible to recal the *One*, as it will be again, to live over the *Other*.

We use to call *Time*, the most *Precious* thing in the World; and use to *Think* it such, when
Matters

Matters of great *Consequence* require quick dispatch ; in that case, a *Day*, an *Hour*, a *Minute* is thought too valuable to be neglected ; lest the Loss, though but of one *Moment*, should at once defeat the Hopes, and spoil all the Labours of an whole *Year*. So that the Improvidenc of many People is astonishing and unaccountable, that when their very *Souls* lie at stake, and Hell and Damnation is *before* them, they should then only be *most* careless of their Time, though the Case be of the *Greatest* Concernment, and the Hazards they run be the most *Fatal*, and the Loss that follows will most certainly be utterly *Irreparable* to all *Eternity*.

But the truth is, Time is *One* of those *Many* Blessings, which Men never so *Prize*, as when they *Want* them. The *Sad* Reflexions of a *Death-Bed* ; the *Weeping*, *Wailing*, and *Gnashing of Teeth* beyond it, do plainly argue, that nothing can be more *Worth* recalling, than Time ; and nothing more *Worth* our husbanding, than the *Present* time ; because when once gone, it is *Never* to be recall'd.

That there may be no room for such *Late* Sorrows, I have laid before you the most necessary, and most profitable Rules I can think of, how you may employ that time, which is now in your *Hands* ; and in a *Moral* sense redeem too what is slipt *Away* ; as, by Industrious Resolutions ; by an active and vigorous Repentance ; by an operative and universal Charity ; by caution and watchfulness every remaining day of your

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Life; and more especially by devoting all the time you can to the Service and Worship of God; which of the several Particulars hath taken up the greatest share of my Meditations, because it is the Employment of Heaven it self, and that which justly claimeth all possible Portions of our time here.

By the diligent performance of these things we may so redeem our Time, as to make a great deal of a few Days; and do that in one Third of one's Life, which some hardly do in their whole Age, though it be a *long* one; and then is a Man's Life to good purpose. For 'tis not how *long*, but how *well* a Man lives, which God considers; nor is it his *Years*, but his *Works*, that will be regarded in God's Day. In short: He that exerts all the Faculties and Powers of his Soul in a Course of Virtue, and to the utmost of his Abilities endeavours to rectifie what hath been amiss: He that doth all the Good he can in his Generation, and spends not a Day without setting forward in some measure his own and other Men's Salvation; He that gives himself to God's Service, and continually makes an Oblation of his Heart, and Incense of his Prayers; *He* it is that *Redeems* his Time *indeed*; so that be it longer or shorter, as God shall see it best for him, however he *Began*, he shall *Finish* his Course well: And as *Eliphas* said, *Job* 5. 26. *He shall come to his Grave in a full Age, like as a Shock of Corn cometh in, in his season.*

Morning

Morning Prayers.

O Lord, teach us so to number our Days, that we may apply our Hearts unto Wisdom. *Amen.*

O Lord, save us thy Servants, who put our whole Trust in Thee. Send us Help from thy Holy Place, and evermore mightily defend us. Let the Enemy have no Advantage of us, nor the Wicked approach to us. But be unto us a Strong Tower from the Face of all our Enemies. *Amen.*

O Lord our Heavenly Father, Almighty and Everlasting God, who hast safely brought us to the Beginning of this Day, defend us in the same with thy mighty Power, and grant, that this Day we fall into no Sin, neither run into any kind of Danger; but that all our Doings may be ordered by thy Governance, to do always that is righteous in thy Sight, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

O God, who knowest us to be set in the midst of so many and great Dangers,
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O God, who knowest us to be set in the midst of so many and great Dangers, that

Morning Prayers.

that, by reason of the Frailty of our Nature, we cannot always stand upright ; grant to us such Strength and Protection, as may support us in all Dangers, and carry us through all Temptations, through Jesus Christ our Lord: *Amen.*

A Almighty God, who seest that we have no Power of our selves to help our selves, keep us, both outwardly in our Bodies, and inwardly in our Souls ; that we may be defended from all Adversities which may happen to the Body, and from all Evil Thoughts which may assault and hurt the Soul, through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

A Almighty God, who hast given thine only Son to be unto us both a Sacrifice for Sin, and also an Ensamble of Godly Life : Give us Grace, that we may always most thankfully receive that his inestimable Benefit, and also daily endeavour our selves to follow the blessed Steps of his most Holy Life, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

O Almighty God, who alone canst order the Unruly Wills and Affections of sinful Men ; Grant unto thy People, that they may love the things which thou commandest, and desire that which thou dost promise ; that so, among the sundry and manifold Changes of the World, our Hearts may surely there be fixt, where True Joys are to be found, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Morning Prayers.

O God, the Protector of all them that trust in thee, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy, increase and multiply upon us thy Mercy; that Thou being our Ruler and Guide, we may so pass through things Temporal, that we finally lose not the things Eternal. Grant this, O Heavenly Father, for Jesus Christ's sake our Lord. *Amen.*

Lord of all Power and Might, who art the Author and Giver of all Good Things; graft in our Hearts the Love of thy Name; increase in us True Religion, nourish us with all Goodness, and of thy great Mercy keep us in the same, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Unto thy Gracious Mercy and Protection, O God, we commit our selves. The Lord bless us, and keep us. The Lord make his Face to shine upon us, and be gracious unto us. The Lord lift up his Countenance upon us, and give us Peace both now and evermore. *Amen.*

Our Father which art in Heaven, Hallowed be thy Name, &c.

Evening

Evening Prayers.

Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Maker of all things, Judge of all Men ; we acknowledge and bewail our manifold Sins and Wickedness, which we from time to time most grievously have committed, by Thought, Word and Deed, against thy Divine Majesty, provoking most justly thy Wrath and Indignation against us. We do earnestly repent, and are heartily sorry for these our Misdoings ; the remembrance of them is grievous unto us, the Burthen of them is intolerable. Have mercy upon us, have mercy upon us, most merciful Father ; for thy Son, our Lord Jesus Christ's sake, forgive us all that is past, and grant, that we may ever hereafter serve and please Thee in Newness of Life, to the Honour and Glory of thy Name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Lighten our Darkness, we beseech thee, O Lord, and by thy great Mercy defend us from all Perils and Dangers of this Night, for the Love of thy only Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

Evening Prayers.

O Everlasting God, who hast ordained and constituted the Services of Angels and Men in a wonderful Order ; mercifully grant, that as thy Aoly Angels alway do thee Service in Heaven ; so by thy Appointment they may succour and defend us on Earth, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

GRant, O Lord, that as we are Baptized in to the Death of thy blessed Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. So by continual mortifying our corrupt Affections, we may be buried with him, and that through the Grave and Gate of Death we may pass to our joyful Resurrection for his Merits, who Died, and was Buried, and Rose again for us, thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

ALmighty and Everlasting God, who art always more ready to hear, than we to pray, and are want to give more than either we desire or deserve ; pour down upon us the Abundance of thy Mercy, forgiving us those things whereof our Conscience is afraid, and giving us those good things which we are not worthy to ask, but through the Merits and Mediation of Jesus Christ thy Son our Lord. *Amen.*

Our Father which art in Heaven, &c.

F I N I S.

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